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1819 marked start of modern, multicultural Singapore: PM Lee

Melody Zaccheus
Heritage and Community Correspondent

Although a thriving seaport existed in Singapore as early as the 14th century, it was the year 1819 that marked the beginning of a modern, outward-looking and multicultural Singapore, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said yesterday.

That year was when the British arrived and made Singapore a free port. PM Lee said the move drew immigrants from South-east Asia, India, China and beyond to the island.

As well, it made trade Singapore's lifeblood and over nearly 150 years, helped to nurture political values, inter-communal relations and world views that "diverged from the society on the other side of the Causeway".

So, without 1819, the path to nationhood as Singaporeans know it today may not have happened, PM Lee said at the launch of the Singapore Bicentennial at the Asian Civilisations Museum.

Also, Singapore would not have had 1965, and it would certainly not

have celebrated the success of SG50, he added, explaining why the bicentenary is worth commemorating.

"We are not just remembering Stamford Raffles or William Farquhar, though we should. We are tracing and reflecting upon our longer history, one that stretches back way before 1819. We are acknowledging and appreciating the broader context which shaped and created today's Singapore."

"This was our journey, from Singapore to Singaporean."

The Prime Minister, in elaborating on the journey, set out the milestones in the Singapore story, which goes back 700 years. He pointed out that Raffles did not "discover" Singapore, any more than Christopher Columbus "discovered" America.

By the time Raffles arrived in 1819, Singapore already had hundreds of years of history, he said, citing, among others, the founding of a kingdom here, around the 14th century, by Sang Nila Utama, who named it Singapura.

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[SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A4&5](#)



Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong meeting "light bearers" – representatives from long-established communities, institutions and organisations – at the launch of the Singapore Bicentennial at the Asian Civilisations Museum last night. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHING

Data of 14,200 people with HIV leaked online by US fraudster

The details of 2,400 at-risk contacts also leaked; American's doctor boyfriend had access to data

Chang Ai-Lien
Science Editor
Fabian Koh

Confidential information of 14,200 people with HIV – including their names, contact details and medical information – was illegally obtained and leaked online by an American fraudster who was deported from Singapore, the Ministry of Health (MOH) revealed yesterday.

Mikhy Farrera-Brochez was jailed in 2017 for several fraud and

drug-related offences and lying to the Ministry of Manpower about his own HIV status.

His partner was Ler Teck Siang, a Singaporean doctor who was head of MOH's National Public Health Unit from March 2012 to May 2013 and had access to the HIV Registry.

He has been charged under the Official Secrets Act (OSA) for failing to take reasonable care of confidential information regarding HIV-positive patients.

Health Minister Gan Kim Yong told reporters yesterday: "I am

sorry that one of our former staff, who was authorised to have access to confidential information in our HIV Registry, appears to not have complied with our security guidelines, and this may have led to an unauthorised person gaining possession of the data and disclosing it online."

The records leaked included those of 5,400 Singaporeans and permanent residents diagnosed with the human immunodeficiency virus up to January 2013 – of whom 1,900 have died – and 8,800 foreigners diagnosed up to December 2011.

Each person's name, identification number, phone number, address and HIV test results were among the information leaked.

Details of 2,400 of their contacts – deemed to be at risk – were also leaked. "Our priority is the well-being of the affected individuals," said MOH. It started contacting affected individuals last Saturday, and has successfully reached more than 1,000 out of all 3,500 HIV-positive Singaporeans.

However, the information is still in the hands of Farrera-Brochez, who was deported after he had served his jail term. He remains outside Singapore.

It came to light that Farrera-Brochez, who was HIV-positive, had used his boyfriend's blood to pass medical tests so that he could work in Singapore, and also got hold of information illegally from

the HIV Registry that Ler had access to.

Farrera-Brochez, 33, who was a polytechnic lecturer here, was sentenced to 28 months in jail in 2017 for offences including cheating and possession of drugs. Ler, 36, has been sentenced to two years in jail for abetment of cheating and for giving a false statement to a public servant. He is appealing.

The ministry learnt of the leak last Tuesday, and made a police report the following day.

Since 2016, it noted, additional safeguards against mishandling of information by authorised staff have been put in place, including a two-person approval process to download and decrypt information.

Mr Gan said MOH will not hesitate to take stern action against staff who violate security guidelines, abuse their authority or their access to information.

The Health Ministry has asked the public to call its hotline on 6325-9220 if they have any information regarding the incident or any concerns.

When contacted, the police said that they are seeking the help of their foreign counterparts in their investigations. They also reminded the public that any person who possessed, used or communicated any confidential information under OSA could face stern action.

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WATCH FEATURED SUBJECT TO STOCK AVAILABILITY

10 must-reads for today

1 Duterte targets militants

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has ordered security forces to crush Muslim militants suspected of perpetrating a twin bomb attack on a church in the country's volatile south that left at least 20 dead and over 100 wounded.

Security officials have identified six "persons of interest" believed to be from an auxiliary unit of the Abu Sayyaf terror group as the main suspects in the attack at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel early on Sunday morning. **TOP OF THE NEWS A8**



Philippine Air Force personnel transferring a victim of the twin bombing, at Edwin Andrews Air Base on Sunday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

2 Data of HIV patients leaked

Confidential data of 14,200 people with HIV – including names, contact details and test results – was illegally obtained and leaked online by American fraudster Mikhy Farrera-Brochez.

Details of their contacts – deemed to be at risk – were also leaked. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

3 China slams US actions

China's Foreign Ministry has called for the United States to stop its "unreasonable suppression" of Chinese firms such as Huawei and provide a fair business environment for them to conduct normal business activities. **WORLD A9**

4 ECRL decision expected

Malaysia is expected to announce this week whether it will proceed with the East Coast Rail Link project after a series of embarrassing flip-flops by the administration of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. However, there are worries that China could retaliate if Kuala Lumpur decides to cancel the multibillion-dollar joint venture with Beijing. **WORLD A13**

5 S'pore, UK: 1819 to 2019

As Singapore commemorates the bicentennial, it is time for a balanced and objective review of Singapore and the United Kingdom's 200-year journey together, says Professor Tommy Koh. **OPINION A15**

6 Spotlight on digital defence

This year's Total Defence Day will feature an exhibition curated by the Singapore Discovery Centre. Our Next Battlefront will focus on fake news, disinformation and cyber threats while seeking to heighten public awareness of how these hazards can impact the nation's survival and how individuals can play their part to guard against them. **HOME B5**

7 Certifying maids' work skills

A programme to assess and certify a foreign maid's household skills is being piloted by the Centre for Domestic Employees in a bid to address the different work expectations of the workers and their employers. **HOME B7**

8 Prioritising sustainability

Sustainability is becoming more important to companies, according to a study of 297 global companies by management consulting firm Bain and Company released yesterday. **BUSINESS C1**

9 S'pore to host 2021 regatta

Singapore will host a sailing world championship event for the first time, after One15 Marina Sentosa Cove Singapore announced yesterday that it has secured the hosting rights for the SB20 World Championships 2021. The marina will host more than 70 boats and teams from around the world from Feb 2 to 6. **SPORT C10**

10 Leads return to iconic play

Iconic Singapore play Off Centre, which is about living with mental illness, will be restaged at the Victoria Theatre from Feb 7 to 17. Actors Abdulattif Abdullah and Sakinah Dollah (below), who are married to each other and met while working on the 1993 production, will be back to reprise their roles. **LIFE D2**



ST PHOTO: JONATHAN CHOO

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VIDEO

Photographer with a cause

House Speaker Tan Chuan-Jin speaks about his love for photography and his upcoming photo exhibition to mark Singapore's bicentennial year. Titled Our Place In The World, the exhibition will also raise funds for 13 charities. <http://str.sg/exhibition>



VIDEO

Bye, bye cubicle

Their office could be on the mountains, or on the beach. Meet the people choosing to lead digitally nomadic lives by using technology to work from anywhere in the world. str.sg/diginomad



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More than 18,500 HDB lifts to be upgraded over 10 years

Lifts in both PAP and WP estates to be modernised with better safety features

Ng Jun Sen

More than 18,500 lifts within Housing Board (HDB) estates will be modernised with better safety features such as high-tech sensors and emergency communication equipment over the next 10 years.

Of these, around 17,000 are lifts managed by the People's Action Party (PAP) town councils, and 1,500 lifts will be upgraded in the next 15 months, the 15 PAP town councils said in a joint statement.

Works on the remainder will be carried out progressively over the next 10 years.

Around 1,500 lifts within the Workers' Party-run Aljunied-Hougang Town Council (AHTC) will also be upgraded over the next 10 years, an AHTC spokesman said in a separate statement, adding that around 180 are scheduled for upgrading in the next 15 months.

These lifts will be upgraded with modern safety features under the \$450 million Lift Enhancement Programme (LEP) funded by the HDB.

The joint statement said the PAP Lift Task Force, which was formed in 2016, had completed its review of the lifts with contractors.

Coordinating MP for PAP town councils, Dr Teo Ho Pin, who led the task force, said the town councils will upgrade only one lift per block at any one time, with each upgrade taking about two weeks. This will minimise inconvenience to residents.

"The details will be worked out, and residents will be notified in advance of the shutdown," he said.



The PAP town councils managed some 24,000 lifts as of last month, and the WP's AHTC, more than 1,700. The HDB programme will equip lifts with recommended components by the Building and Construction Authority (BCA). The modern features will enhance the lifts' safety and performance, said Dr Teo.

Besides the LEP, the PAP town councils have adopted new working protocols to manage tenders and contractors, and is testing a new system to help town councils manage their lifts.

A lift surveillance system giving

round-the-clock information on lift breakdowns is also on schedule to be implemented, said Dr Teo.

The HDB programme extends to lifts that are less than 18 years old at the start of the LEP, which means that older lifts will not qualify for the scheme. These may be considered for replacement under a different scheme, said Dr Teo.

Veteran lift engineer Kok Peng Koon, 80, agreed lifts that are more than three decades old would have suffered so much corrosion and wear that it would be more feasible to replace them entirely than to upgrade them any further.

With a majority now slated for upgrading, experts said this would serve as an incentive for private and commercial lift owners to follow suit and adopt BCA's list of recommended components.

Mr Chee Yan Pong, 73, who owns consulting engineering firm YP Chee and Associates, said commercial parties will have to do so on their own dime.

"Rather than through mandate, this is a softer, more progressive way to teach private lift owners to upgrade their lifts," said Mr Chee.

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Ageing lifts will be upgraded with modern safety features under the \$450 million Lift Enhancement Programme funded by the Housing Board.
ST FILE PHOTO

New sensors could help prevent incidents

The added safety features to be installed in most Housing Board lifts could help prevent the erratic behaviour that has plagued some lifts in the past, lift experts said yesterday.

The upgrades, to be installed in some 18,500 lifts in HDB blocks over the next decade, include modern sensors and emergency features, they said.

The eight safety components were recommended by the Building and Construction Authority in 2016 following a number of HDB lift incidents that caused death or injury.

They include sensors that can detect overspeeding by a lift car and prevent unintended lift car movement, light sensors to detect whether the doors are closed, an interlocking door panel switch to stop a lift from moving if the doors are not closed, an emergency telephone or communication device inside the lift, and a battery-powered automatic rescue device that can release trapped users safely during lift breakdowns and power failures.

Most old lifts do not have any of these features as they were built before the technology became commonplace, lift examiners, engineers and consultants told The Straits Times.

"It is like when airbags first came out for the automotive industry. Cars before the invention of airbags might have been deemed safe in the past, but now every car must have airbags for it to be considered safe for passengers," said lift engineer Chee Yan Pong, 73.

One of the features to be installed is overspeed protection, which can detect whether an ascending lift has accelerated beyond its design limit, braking the lift car before it hits the top of the lift shaft, said independent lift and escalator specialist Foo Teik Yong, 50.

In March 2016, a domestic helper hurt her back after the lift she was in abruptly shot up 17 floors and stalled, trapping her for 1½ hours.

An investigation found that the lift brakes were not working properly.

Mr Foo said another sensor that protects against unintended car movement would prevent the lift car from carrying on when it reaches its stop. This would help to keep it level with the ground when the doors open.

In 2016, an elderly man in a motorised mobility scooter died after it tipped over as he was backing it out of a lift in Pasir Ris. The lift car was higher than the ground by about 13cm.

In that same year, a Bukit Batok resident reported that she fractured her wrists and bruised her eye when she tripped while exiting a lift that was not level with the floor.

But Mr Foo said that having these features alone might not have stopped these past incidents from occurring as much also depends on how residents use the lift, the specification of the new safety features and the circumstances of each case.

Ng Jun Sen



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A multimedia show called Bridges Of Time being staged at last night's bicentennial launch at the Singapore River, featuring the story of a universal traveller who sails through time and space to reach a mythical island in the East. ST PHOTOS: DESMOND WEE

PM Lee: Join hands to write a greater Singapore Story

As nation marks bicentenary, we need to think how we can move forward together, he says

Melody Zaccheus
Heritage and Community
Correspondent

As Singaporeans mark the nation's bicentennial year by reflecting on how it came into being, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong urged them to also "think of how we can move forward together".

Noting that Singapore is always a work in progress, he said at the launch of the Singapore Bicentennial yesterday: "It is every generation's duty to keep on building, for our children, and for our future."

In doing so, Singaporeans not yet born will have, in another 50 or 100 years, a richer and greater Singapore story to tell. It will be, he added, "one that we will have helped to write together".

The year-long bicentenary, which will feature, among others, projects by artists, schools and ethnic associations, started along the Singapore River to understand where Singapore began, and will close at Marina Bay to look forward into the future.

Following his speech, PM Lee, and political and community leaders saw a visual representation of much of the historical milestones he spoke about, in a multimedia light show, called Bridges Of Time.

Using light, sound, projection and water, and set against the city skyline, it tells the story of a traveller who sails through time and space to reach a mythical island – Singapore. The group then toured the Civic District where projections depicting different nuggets of history were cast onto the facades of neighbouring monuments.

Earlier in his address, the Prime Minister spoke about Singapore's separation from Malaysia, saying that both parting ways in less than two years after the merger was not surprising, in retrospect.

Tracing events since Sir Stamford Raffles established Singapore as a free port, he said: "Over nearly 150 years, our political values, inter-communal relations, and worldviews had diverged from the society on the other side of the Causeway."

His identification as South-east Asian and Malayan, seeded in 1819, drove Singapore to join the Federation of Malaysia in 1963, he added. But as a British colony, Singapore was never governed as part of Malaya and that made "us quite different from our neighbours and friends", said PM Lee.

He also noted that even before the British came, Singapore already had a thriving seaport called Temasek at the mouth of the Singapore River.

The population grew with immigrants, and the streets of Singapore tell of their diverse origins, he noted, citing Malacca Street, Amoy Street, Kadayannallur Street, Bugis Street and Bussorah Street.

"Thus, we became a multicultural and open society," he added.

Trade, the island's lifeblood, linked Singapore to the neighbouring archipelago and the world beyond, and economic and family ties were developed, especially with the Malay peninsula, said PM Lee.

However, Singapore's history since 1819 ensured that it not only survived but also thrived after separation.

PM Lee credited the pioneer generation with having the grit and resolve to show they could be masters of their own fate when Singapore left Malaysia.

The journey, however, was not without triumphs and tragedies. Paying tribute to the nation's forebears, he said they paid with blood, sweat and tears.

They cleared the jungles, and planted nutmeg, gambier and rubber. Indentured coolies slaved at the quayside. Resourceful traders built import and export businesses, creating prosperity.

In the process, communities were formed to help one another, including Chinese clans, welfare bodies like the Sree Narayana Mission and cultural groups like Angkutan Sasterawan 50.

"Over two centuries, all these different strands wove together into a rich tapestry, a shared sense of identity and eventually, a Singapore identity and nation."

PM Lee said he is glad that more than 200 groups and organisations are holding commemorative events for the bicentenary. "Their stories and journeys are the personal experiences and collective memories that give life and meaning to the Singapore Bicentennial story," he said.

ON THE 1965 SEPARATION

Throughout the colonial period, Singapore was never governed as part of Malaya. The island was either a separate crown colony or a part of the Straits Settlements, which included Penang and Malacca, but not the other Malay states. Over nearly 150 years, our political values, our inter-communal relations and our worldviews had diverged from the society on the other side of the Causeway. So, in retrospect, it was not surprising that less than two years after merger with Malaysia, we had to part ways, in an emotionally wrenching separation.

”

PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEN LOONG

That was back in the 14th century. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Europeans who came to South-east Asia knew about the island.

When Raffles arrived in 1819, his establishment of Singapore as a free port was a "crucial turning point in our history", the PM said, as "it set this island on a trajectory leading to where we are today".

SCAN TO WATCH Singapore Bicentennial celebrations kick off. <http://str.sg/sbcentennial>



Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah student Mohamed Hussein, 17, recently documented the history of Singapore's oldest mosque. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

Remembering community histories

At just 17, Mohamed Hussein has become a champion of history.

His fascination is with the story of Singapore's oldest mosque – the Masjid Omar Kampong Melaka – which was built in 1820 by pioneer Arab businessman and philanthropist Syed Omar Aljunied. "I think the bicentennial is a good opportunity for young Singaporeans like myself to find out about our past before 1965," said the Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah student, who recently documented the mosque's history.

He was one of 50 light bearers representing Singapore's earliest arrivals, at the bicentennial launch yesterday.

Speaking on the sidelines of the event in the Civic District yesterday, Manpower Minister Josephine Teo and Minister for Social and Family Development Desmond Lee – both of whom are co-chairs of the ministerial steering committee for the Singapore Bicentennial Office – emphasised the importance of community histories.

Mrs Teo noted that many people arrived with Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819, bringing their cultures and

customs. Eventually, they built communities and shaped the development of Singapore.

"The many communities that settled here, the many individuals, over time they learnt to support one another, they built hospitals, they started schools, and very importantly they found some ways to give back to society," she said.

Mr Alexius Pereira, 52, president of the Eurasian Association, a partner of the Singapore Bicentennial Office, said service to the community is still the way forward, noting: "In 1919, the Eurasian Association was formed. So, as Singapore celebrates its bicentennial, the association's 100th birthday will celebrate serving the community and our contributions to Singapore."

Mr Lee hoped the bicentennial would give Singaporeans a chance to reflect on the themes of openness to communities, trade and ideas, multiculturalism and self-determination, values that have allowed Singapore to thrive and hold firmly to the conviction that "we need to determine our own future ourselves".

Melody Zaccheus

Take a walk down AR trail to experience Singapore's past

Melody Zaccheus
Heritage and Community
Correspondent

Taking a walk along the Singapore River now comes with a new experience.

A new augmented reality (AR) trail by the National Heritage Board (NHB) has been designed to bring Singapore's history to life.

For instance, scanning an AR marker outside the UOB Plaza at Boat Quay via the new BalikSG app will reveal a scene from the 1880s.

Users will get to see shophouses and godowns (warehouses) lining the river, bumboats bobbing in the water as well as coolies straining to heave sacks of goods near the busy promenade.

The free BalikSG app was announced yesterday as part of the bicentenary's official launch by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

The app's Singapore River trail, which covers Singapore's colonial past, has eight stops which can be accessed in any order.

It spans about 2km and takes about two hours to complete.

The NHB's strategic communications and digital manager, Mr Nicholas Chen, said they tapped the collections in the National Museum and National Archives to put together the app, which took about a year to complete.

The app also comes with write-ups and old photos.

He said: "We hope to present heritage and history in a fun and interactive manner so as to reach out to people who don't usually visit a museum."

At three stops, app users will be able to get acquainted with representatives from communities such as the coolies, Chettis – Singa-

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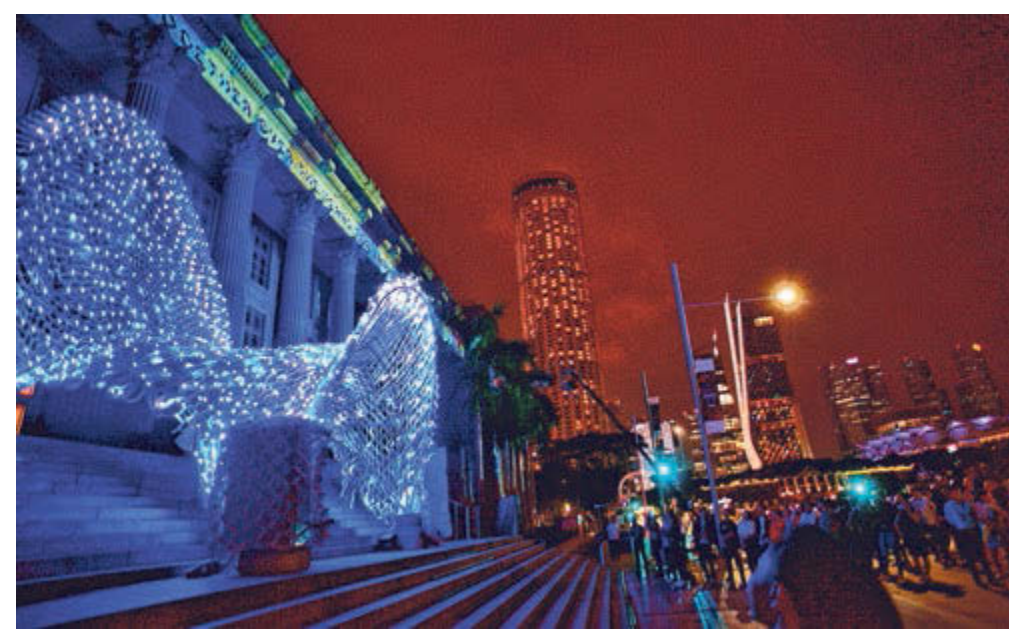
MR NICHOLAS CHEN, NHB's strategic communications and digital manager, on the free BalikSG app.

At three stops, app users will be able to get acquainted with representatives from communities such as the coolies, Chettis – Singa-

Another highlight of the trail is the stop at the Raffles Landing Site



Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong with Kayla Choy, 11, the youngest participant in the bicentennial launch. She and others will document the history of her school, St Anthony's Canossian. PHOTO: AKA ASIA



The Memory Conduit art installation (foreground). In the background, a light show called Secrets Of The Sand, Written In The Stars, Snapshots In Time plays on the National Gallery Singapore's facade.



A scene from Bridges Of Time featuring scenes from early Singapore such as kampungs and boats. The bicentennial celebrations kicked off along the Singapore River and will close at Marina Bay.

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SCAN TO SHOP

AN NTC Social Enterprise

Key facts about the leak

The Ministry of Health (MOH) revealed yesterday that confidential information of 14,200 people diagnosed with HIV was stolen and leaked online.



1. What information was disclosed?

Data taken from the HIV Registry, involving 14,200 people diagnosed with human immunodeficiency virus up to January 2013, and 2,400 of their contacts. The leaked details included their names, HIV test results, identification numbers, phone numbers and addresses.

2. Who is affected by the leak?

A total of 5,400 Singaporeans and permanent residents (PRs) diagnosed with HIV up to January 2013, and 8,800 foreigners diagnosed with HIV up to December 2011. Of the 5,400 Singaporeans and PRs affected, 1,900 have died. MOH said that more than 1,000 of the 3,500 who are alive had been successfully contacted as of 4pm yesterday. According to the ministry, a large number of the foreigners are no longer in Singapore.

3. Who leaked the information?

Mikhy Farrera-Brochez (far right), an American who was on an employment pass here between January 2008 and June 2016. In March 2017, he was sentenced to 28 months in jail for fraud and drug-related offences, including lying to the Ministry of Manpower about his own HIV status. Farrera-Brochez, who was HIV-positive, was found to have used his boyfriend's blood for an HIV test to apply for an employment pass to stay here. He later worked as a polytechnic lecturer. He was deported upon completing his sentence in April last year.

4. How did Farrera-Brochez get hold of the information?

His partner was Ler Teck Siang, a Singaporean doctor who was head of MOH's National Public Health Unit from March 2012 to May 2013. Ler had the authority to access information in the HIV Registry for his work. Ler, who is still a registered doctor, has been charged under the Official Secrets Act (OSA) for failing to take reasonable care of confidential information regarding HIV-positive patients. In September last year, Ler was convicted of abetting Farrera-Brochez to commit cheating and of providing false information to the police and MOH. He has appealed against the two-year sentence.

5. Where is Farrera-Brochez now?

He is currently not in Singapore, and MOH was unable to comment further yesterday as the police are investigating the case. The police are investigating him for various offences, and the authorities are seeking assistance from their foreign counterparts.

6. When did MOH find out that information from the HIV Registry had been leaked?

In May 2016, MOH received information that Farrera-Brochez held confidential information which appeared to be from the

HIV Registry, and a police report was made. Farrera-Brochez and Ler's properties were searched, and all relevant material found then was seized by the police. In May last year, MOH received information that Farrera-Brochez still had part of the records he had in 2016. The information did not appear to have been leaked. MOH made a police report and contacted affected individuals. Last Tuesday, MOH found out that he had put the information online.

7. What has MOH done to prevent future leaks?

The ministry has put in place additional safeguards against mishandling of information by authorised staff since 2016. Yesterday, MOH said it will continue to regularly review its systems to ensure that they remain secure and the necessary safeguards are in place. In September 2016, a two-person approval process to download and decrypt HIV Registry information was implemented. This process ensures that confidential information cannot be accessed by a single person. In addition, a workstation was specifically configured and locked down to prevent unauthorised information removal, and designated for processing sensitive information from the HIV Registry. As part of a government-wide policy, the use of personal storage devices on official computers was disabled at MOH in 2017.

TEXT: CHOO YUN TING PHOTOS: REUTERS, TNP STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS



American fraudster Mikhy Farrera-Brochez, who leaked the data online.

TIMELINE

March 2008

Farrera-Brochez applies for an employment pass to stay in Singapore with Ler, using Ler's blood for an HIV test.

March 2012 to May 2013

Ler heads the Health Ministry's National Public Health Unit and has access to the HIV Registry.

January 2014

Ler resigns.

May 2016

MOH lodges a police report after receiving information that Farrera-Brochez possessed information which appeared to be from the HIV Registry.

June 2016

Ler is charged with offences under the Penal Code and Official Secrets Act. Farrera-Brochez is remanded in prison.

March 2017

Farrera-Brochez is convicted of numerous fraud and drug-related offences, and sentenced to 28 months in jail.

April 2018

Farrera-Brochez is released from prison and deported.

May 2018

After Farrera-Brochez's deportation, MOH receives information that Brochez still has part of the records he had in 2016. At the time, the records did not appear to have been disclosed publicly. MOH makes a police report and contacts the affected individuals to notify them.

September 2018

Ler is convicted of abetting Farrera-Brochez to commit cheating, and of providing false information to the police and MOH. He is sentenced to 24 months in jail.

Jan 22, 2019

MOH is notified by the police that confidential information from the HIV Registry could be in Farrera-Brochez's possession, and had been leaked online.

Jan 23, 2019

MOH makes a police report.

Jan 24, 2019

MOH ascertains that the disclosed information matches the HIV Registry's records up to January 2013.

Jan 24-25, 2019

MOH works with relevant parties to disable access to the information.

March 2019

Ler's appeal against his 24-month sentence to be heard.

Doctor in data leak incident can no longer practise medicine here

36-year-old still on practitioners' register but no longer has the certificate to practise and cannot access patient records

Salma Khalik
Senior Health Correspondent

The doctor whose boyfriend leaked the details of 14,200 people with HIV, and another 2,400 of their contacts – including sexual partners and drug users who could also be at risk of infection – is still on the Register of Medical Practitioners.

But he no longer has a certificate to practise medicine in Singapore.

Ler Teck Siang, 36, also does not have access to the confidential information of patients in the National Electronic Health Records (NEHR), which includes all public-sector patients.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) said: "Ler remains registered as a doctor, but he currently does not have access to MOH and public healthcare IT systems with patient records. In particular, he has had no access to the NEHR system since January 2014. He will not be permitted access to any of these systems."

When asked why he has not been taken off the Register of Medical Practitioners, Singapore Medical Council (SMC) Registrar Benjamin Ong said the council has to follow due process.

Associate Professor Ong, who is also director of medical services at MOH, said Ler has appealed against his conviction and 24-month jail sentence – for abetting of cheating and for giving a false statement to a public servant – and the appeal will be heard in March.

Ler had given a sample of his blood in place of that of his HIV-positive boyfriend, Mikhy Farrera-Brochez so that the American could pass medical tests to work in Singapore.

Now, he faces another charge of

mishandling information under the Official Secrets Act (OSA) while he was head of the National Public Health Unit.

That resulted in the details of all 14,200 people diagnosed with HIV here since 1985 – until 2013 for locals and 2011 for foreigners – landing in the hands of Farrera-Brochez. The American also has the personal details of 2,400 people who were their contacts.

Farrera-Brochez, 33, recently released these details online.

Meanwhile, the charge against Ler under the OSA is pending his appeal on the earlier charges. Historically, the SMC does not take action against a doctor until any legal appeal has been disposed of.

peal on the earlier charges. Historically, the SMC does not take action against a doctor until any legal appeal has been disposed of.

MOH'S DECISION TO ANNOUNCE THE LEAK

Mr Chan Heng Kee, Permanent Secretary at MOH, said several factors are considered in deciding whether to go public with such incidents.

The key consideration is patients' interest and well-being.

He said: "From there, we consider factors (such as) whether the information was publicly disclosed. Whether there is a continuing risk of the information being exposed even if we were able to secure."

"And also the concerns that individuals might have, should the incident be made public."

In this case, the information has been disclosed online.

He added: "Certainly in the case where the information has been contained, we would take a more conservative approach."

The other reason is that more than half those affected are foreigners, and it will be difficult for the ministry to contact them.

Going public may get those with concerns to contact MOH.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION COULD RESURFACE IN FUTURE

The authorities have blocked online access to the details put out by Farrera-Brochez. But they were not able to retrieve the information from him as they have not been able to get in touch with him since he is no longer in Singapore.

Mr Chan said: "(Since) he is still in possession of the information, it is possible that it could still be publicly disclosed."

It is also possible that others have got copies of the information now that he has put it online, or because it was given to them by him.

MOH HAS NO STATUTORY IMMUNITY

MOH "has no statutory immunity" and, hence, cannot "rule out the possibility of lawsuits" as a result of this breach, Mr Chan said that a lot would depend on what the police uncover in their investigation.

However, MOH is doing everything possible to help those affected, including providing a hotline and counsellors. Many of those contacted were anxious, distressed and concerned, he said. As at 4pm yesterday, over 1,000 had been contacted.

STEPS TAKEN TO PREVENT LEAKS

Associate Professor Vernon Lee, director of the communicable diseases division at the ministry, said safeguards against such a breach had been rolled out since 2016.

Now, two people must give approval before the information can be downloaded and decrypted. This has to be done at a designated workstation that is "specifically configured and locked down" to prevent the unauthorised removal of information.

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Speaking to reporters yesterday, Health Minister Gan Kim Yong said the ministry will not hesitate to take stern action against staff who violate security guidelines, or abuse their authority or their access to information. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

Who are the pair at the centre of HIV data leak?

Fabian Koh

The duo at the centre of the HIV Registry leak were boyfriends who hatched a plot to trick the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) into issuing one of them an employment pass (EP).

Mikhy Farrera-Brochez, 33, had met Singaporean general practitioner Ler Teck Siang, 36, online. The American lived in Singapore for eight years on an EP, from 2008 to 2016.

He had moved to Singapore a year after the pair got into a romantic relationship. As he knew that foreigners with HIV are not allowed to work here, Farrera-Brochez, who is HIV-positive, conspired with Ler to falsify

his blood test results.

To successfully apply for an employment pass to stay here with his boyfriend, Farrera-Brochez submitted a HIV-negative test result to MOM in March 2008 using Ler's blood for the test.

He visited a clinic in Commonwealth, where Ler was on duty as a locum GP, for a medical examination. Ler had drawn blood from his left arm earlier that day and labelled the test tube with Farrera-Brochez's particulars.

Farrera-Brochez got his EP, and worked as a polytechnic lecturer.

Using the same ruse, the pair duped the authorities again in 2013, when Farrera-Brochez tried to apply for a Personalised Em-

ployment Pass.

Investigations later revealed that his various educational certificates, including one from the University of Paris, were forged. He was also found guilty of possessing a ketamine and cannabis mixture in May 2016.

The American was remanded in prison in June 2016, and sentenced to 28 months in jail for fraud and drug-related offences in 2017. Upon his release from prison in April last year, Farrera-Brochez was deported. He is not in Singapore, and his whereabouts are not known.

Meanwhile, Ler was charged in 2016 under the Penal Code and Official Secrets Act (OSA). He was convicted in September

last year of abetting Farrera-Brochez to cheat and of providing false information to the police and Ministry of Health (MOH).

Sentenced to two years in jail, Ler is appealing against the sentence, with the hearing scheduled for March.

Meanwhile, he is still on the Singapore Medical Council's Register of Medical Practitioners. But he does not have a practising certificate or access to MOH and public healthcare IT systems with patient records.

"In particular, he has had no access to the National Electronic Health Record system since January 2014. He will not be permitted access to any of these systems," said MOH

As the head of MOH's National

Public Health Unit from March 2012 to May 2013, Ler could access information in the HIV Registry for his work purposes.

Heresigned in January 2014. It was from his mishandling of information that the leak of HIV Registry information is believed to have taken place. This includes not having complied with policies and guidelines on the handling of critical information.

Ler has also been charged under the OSA for failing to take reasonable care of confidential information regarding HIV-positive patients. This charge is pending before the courts.

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Victims of incident stunned and worried

Cheryl Teh

The revelation that the personal information of 14,200 people with HIV was leaked has stunned those living with the virus here.

Patients like 45-year-old Mr G. Chew told The Straits Times the leak has put both his personal and professional reputation at risk.

"My company is aware that I have HIV, and I am fairly open about it to well-meaning friends who ask me about my illness out of genuine concern," said Mr Chew, an administrative officer, who was informed by the Ministry of Health (MOH) that he was affected by the data leak.

"However, I definitely fear that all this personal information might be publicly available to people at my workplace and beyond to scrutinise. Also, it is the Internet – once it is up there and shared over and over, it is unerasable."

"There is still a great stigma against people who have HIV. Information that I have HIV is definitely not something I want online. It is not like it is an award."

When Jay (not his real name), who is in his 20s, heard news of the leak, his first thought was of his 60-year-old mother and the harassment and judgment she could face from family and friends.

"Having HIV is to me an embarrassing thing and definitely an extremely private matter," Jay told ST, adding that only one close friend knows about his illness. He was diagnosed around 2011, which means he is among the affected individuals, though he has not been contacted by MOH. A total of 5,400 Singaporeans and permanent residents diagnosed with HIV up to January 2013

have been affected by the leak.

"I have not told my mother about it, and I don't intend to. I have accepted that Aids is what I have to live with forever, but I am afraid that if this information is made public, my family and close friends will be ostracised and laughed at," Jay added.

MOH revealed that some 1,900 names in the leaked data were of people who had already died.

Ms C. Koh, 31, said she suspects her late brother, who was diagnosed in 2008 and died of HIV-related medical complications in 2016, might be on the list. She said she hopes her family would receive advice from MOH on what to do if their deceased family member's data has indeed been leaked.

"After my brother passed, my father and I thought that this situation could be put to bed. We are very concerned that his data – including our home address – might be spread online by malicious people," Ms Koh said.

"This is opening old wounds for us, and the idea that my late brother's personal data is, even now, not secure, is very disturbing. We want to know why people like him are being targeted."

In a statement last night, Professor Roy Chan, president of the Action for Aids advocacy group, said it was "deeply troubled by this incident that has the potential of damaging the lives of persons living with HIV and their loved ones".

"We stand with all whose private information may have been accessed and violated. This is a criminal act that should be condemned and answered in the most severe terms possible," he added.

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Help available for those affected

The Ministry of Health (MOH) said that it has been progressively contacting individuals affected by the HIV Registry leak since Saturday to notify them and provide assistance.

Among the 5,400 Singaporeans and permanent residents whose data had been leaked, 1,900 have died.

Mr Chan Heng Kee, Permanent Secretary for Health, said that the ministry is reaching out to the remaining 3,500 individuals.

An MOH spokesman said that the ministry has attempted to contact all of them, but has not reached all successfully.

As of 4pm yesterday, more than 1,000 out of the 3,500 in-

dividuals had been contacted successfully.

Members of the public who come across any information related to this incident have been asked to notify MOH immediately and not share it further. They can provide the information or raise other concerns to the ministry by calling the hotline on 6325-9220.

Mr Chan said that there are also counsellors on standby to help those affected deal with any anxiety, distress and concerns they may have.

Individuals can also call the hotline should they have additional concerns a few days after the initial phone call and conversation.

Vivian lists three ways for S'pore to stay relevant

In a fractured world, it must remain open, fortify multilateral system and diversify partnerships

Adrian Lim
Political Correspondent

To navigate a fractured world order and the accelerating digital disruption, Singapore must stay relevant, and this foreign policy principle remains as salient today as it was in 1965, said Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan.

Speaking at a conference yesterday, Dr Balakrishnan outlined three ways the Republic can achieve this: Remaining open, working to fortify the multilateral system, and diversifying partnerships such as with other Asean cities.

He was addressing 1,200 members from the policymaking and business communities, academia and civil society at the Singapore Perspectives conference organised by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS).

Singapore must always remain open for business, and especially to talent, as well as maintain its reputation of integrity and for being trusted by all, said Dr Balakrishnan.

In fact, Singapore needs to actively create conditions that will attract talent and business. "We will have to continue to strengthen our

air, sea and digital connectivity, deepening our economic and investment links with partners across the globe," he added.

Also, Singapore's legal framework must continue to respond to emerging technologies so that intellectual property, data and privacy will be protected, he said.

The second way Singapore can stay relevant is by working to fortify the multilateral system, and to contribute actively to shaping new norms to govern the global commons. For example, Singapore played an active role in the negotiations of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and in the Paris Agreement to combat climate change.

"And Singapore can always be counted on to send our best people to these international expert groups and negotiations so that we make a positive, constructive and outsized contribution," he added.

Singapore must also continue to uphold international law and the rules-based international order, Dr Balakrishnan noted.

Third, Singapore must diversify partnerships as technological disruption will erode borders, revolu-

tionise business models and shift production bases, he said.

Singapore must go beyond conventional markets and break "safe models" to capitalise on opportunities, Dr Balakrishnan noted.

South-east Asia's Internet economy, for example, hit US\$72 billion (S\$97.4 billion) last year, doubling from 2015, and thicker and deeper linkages across Asean cities can be built, creating new partnerships.

A first step in this direction is the Asean Smart Cities Network comprising 26 cities, which was launched last year. This platform allows cities to cooperate, share experiences and work with private-sector partners towards smart and sustainable urban development.

In a broad-ranging speech at the Sands Expo and Convention Centre, Dr Balakrishnan traced how the world economy has been shaped over the decades by the industrial revolution, Fordism and post-war globalisation.

The world is now in a new "digital gilded age", with the rise of smart technologies. This has created winners, such as supra-national technology companies like Google and Facebook, which are growing

in economic and political clout, and losers, such as workers who have lost their jobs due to disruptive changes.

As a result, there is increasing polarisation and the hollowing out of the centre, or mainstream politics, in many societies, said Dr Balakrishnan. There is a fractured world order, due to fractious domestic politics which is caused by digital disruption, he said.

"There will be countries that are afraid of change and fearing competition, will question the value of the current liberal world order.

"On the other hand, nations like Singapore believe we need to master the new technologies, face competition head on, double down on interdependence, integration, openness and to seek win-win cooperation," he said.

During yesterday's conference, themed Singapore.World, topics such as the impact of US-China relations on the region and how Singapore can tap opportunities in the region were also addressed.

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SEE HOME B2&3



Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan (left) and IPS director Janadas Devan sharing a light-hearted moment at the Singapore Perspectives conference yesterday. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

S'pore, Malaysia hold discussions on maritime boundaries dispute

Royston Sim
Deputy News Editor (Politics)

A joint working group looking at the maritime boundaries dispute between Singapore and Malaysia met in Putrajaya, Malaysia, yesterday and had "constructive discussions on a set of positive recommendations".

In a statement yesterday, Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the recommendations will be submitted to the foreign ministers of both countries for their consideration when finalised.

The Malaysia-Singapore Working Group was announced by Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan and his Malaysian counterpart Saifuddin Abdullah after they met in Singapore on Jan 8.

It was tasked with studying and discussing the legal and operational matters in order to de-escalate the situation on the ground, and provide a basis for further discussions and negotiations.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Permanent Secretary Chee Wee Kiong and his Malaysian counterpart Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob led the delegations that met in Putrajaya yesterday.

Singapore and Malaysia have been embroiled in a maritime dispute after Kuala Lumpur unilaterally extended the Johor Baru port limits on Oct 25 last year, encroaching on Singapore's territorial waters off Tuas.

As a result, Malaysian government vessels had entered Singapore's waters.

The new boundary line extends beyond what Malaysia had previously claimed as its own waters in a 1979 map, which Singapore has never accepted.

On Dec 6, Singapore extended its own port limits in response to cover the full extent of the Republic's territorial waters.

Both countries are also locked in a dispute over Singapore's introduction of new landing procedures for Seletar Airport and Malaysia's subsequent decision to declare a restricted zone over Pasir Gudang for the purpose of military activities.

On Jan 8, Singapore and Malaysia had agreed to a one-month suspension of the restricted area over Pasir Gudang and the new Instrument Landing System (ILS) at Seletar Airport.

Both countries agreed last week to extend their mutual suspension of the two measures to March 31.

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Worst attacks in the Philippines

SIMULTANEOUS BLASTS

On a holiday to remember the country's national hero, Jose Rizal, near-simultaneous bombings in December 2000 killed 22 people and injured more than 100 in Manila. One explosion rocked a plaza across from the US Embassy. Bombs also tore through a train, a passenger bus and a cargo handling facility at the international airport.

DEADLIEST ATTACK

A February 2004 firebombing of a ferry in Manila Bay, which killed 116 people, was the country's deadliest terror attack.

The ship was engulfed in flames as it sailed out of Manila Bay with 899 people on board. Many of them were rescued by small vessels in the area.

The notorious Abu Sayyaf kidnap-for-ransom group, which is suspected of being behind Sunday's church bombing, claimed that it had planted an explosive on board the vessel.

MARKET EXPLOSION

At least 15 people were killed and scores more wounded in December 2004 when a bomb blast tore through a public market in General Santos, one of the biggest Christian-majority cities in the south of the mainly Catholic Philippines.

KILLED WHILE SLEEPING

Gunmen launched a raid in the town of Maluso on the southern island of Basilan in February 2010, killing 11 people. Many of the victims were sleeping when their homes were strafed with bullets. Buildings were later torched. Abu Sayyaf was blamed for the violence.

ATTACK IN PRESIDENT'S HOME TOWN

A September 2016 bombing that ripped through a bustling night market in President Rodrigo Duterte's home town left 15 dead, and was blamed on the Maute gang of Islamist militants that pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) group.

The authorities said the militants carried out the violence partly to raise its profile with ISIS.

MARAWI SIEGE

Marawi, the nation's principal Islamic city, was besieged from May to October 2017 by hundreds of heavily armed local and foreign gunmen who the authorities said aimed to establish a South-east Asian base for ISIS.

Swathes of the southern city were destroyed in five months of house-to-house fighting between troops and the Islamists from the Abu Sayyaf and Maute groups that killed nearly 1,200 people.

The attackers were ultimately dislodged, but only after some of the worst urban fighting the nation had seen since World War II.

VAN BOMB

Ten people, including troops and civilians, were killed when a bomb in a van blew up at an army checkpoint in Basilan in July last year. The powerful explosion, claimed by ISIS, occurred after soldiers and pro-government militiamen stopped the vehicle for a search just after dawn. The authorities believe the attacker intended to target a children's event in a nearby town, but set off the bomb on being intercepted. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Duterte orders security forces to crush Abu Sayyaf for bomb blasts

Raul Dancel
Philippines Correspondent
In Manila

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday ordered security forces to crush a band of Muslim militants suspected of perpetrating two bomb attacks on a Roman Catholic cathedral in the volatile south that left at least 20 dead and more than 100 wounded.

Security officials tagged six "persons of interest" from the Ajang-ajang faction of the Abu Sayyaf as the main suspects. The Abu Sayyaf has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which claimed responsibility for the attack.

When asked what Mr Duterte wanted the military and the police to do, Defence Secretary Delfin

Lorenzana told reporters: "On the Abu Sayyaf, crush them (for the bombings), and for all the atrocities they have committed so far."

Mr Lorenzana accompanied Mr Duterte during a brief visit to Jolo town in Sulu province, where the militants set off two blasts that tore through the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel during mass early on Sunday morning.

A senior military official said the Ajang-ajang faction was formed in 2014 and consists of no more than 60 kin - mostly teenagers - of Abu Sayyaf militants killed over the years by security forces.

Ajang-ajang is an ethnic term in Sulu that means "sons of warriors" or "sons of martyrs".

The military official, who asked not to be named because he was disclosing sensitive information, said

the faction had never ventured out of Jolo Island, and mostly stuck to extortion, drug dealing and spotting hostages for the Abu Sayyaf.

Mr Rommel Banlaoi, executive director of the Philippine Institution for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research, told CNN Philippines the group had apparently levelled up to ideology-fuelled revenge killings.

He named Hatib Sawadjaan, an ISIS sympathiser and father-in-law of Malaysian militant Amin Baco, as among the leaders of the Ajang-ajang faction.

Baco was at one time rumoured to have been designated as the new ISIS emir in South-east Asia, replacing Isnilon Hapilon, the Abu Sayyaf chieftain killed in the 2017 siege of southern Marawi city.

The church attack came nearly a week after over 1.5 million Muslims

in the predominantly Catholic nation overwhelmingly approved a more powerful autonomous region in the south. They voted for the new region called Bangsamoro, or nation of Moros, in hopes of ending nearly five decades of separatist rebellion and reining in a new wave of Islamist extremism sweeping war-torn Mindanao Island.

Voters in Sulu, however, rejected it. Still, the province will be included in the new region as it is part of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which as a bloc voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Bangsamoro law.

That has raised fears of reprisals by militant groups, who are opposed to any peace deal with the government and are opting instead to embrace ISIS' wider agenda to establish a caliphate in South-east Asia.

The country's 170,000-strong police force is now on "heightened alert status". This means more checkpoints and patrols, especially around shopping malls, train and bus stations, airports, harbours and other vulnerable targets.

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Policemen and soldiers outside the wrecked church in Jolo, Sulu province, which was hit by two bomb attacks on Sunday. Security officials have tagged six "persons of interest" from the Ajang-ajang faction of the Abu Sayyaf as the main suspects. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WORLD



KAMALA HARRIS
DEMOCRATIC SENATOR
KICKS OFF CAMPAIGN FOR
PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION **A14**

Beijing slams US for suppressing Chinese firms

This follows report that US urged allies to avoid Huawei equipment

Lim Yan Liang
China Correspondent
In Beijing

The United States must stop its “unreasonable suppression” of Chinese firms such as Huawei, and provide a fair business environment for them to conduct normal business activities in its market, the Chinese Foreign Ministry has said.

“In the absence of any evidence, the use of state power to discredit and attack specific enterprises is neither fair nor moral,” ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a regular press briefing yesterday.

Mr Geng was responding to a New York Times article that said Washington has, for the past year, been stealthily pressing its allies to steer clear of networking equipment made by tech giant Huawei as countries roll out their next-generation 5G network infrastructure, due to security concerns.

While each country is naturally entitled to protect its information security, this “cannot be used as a pretence to damage or strangle legitimate business activity”, he said.

Noting the NYT report said there has been no evidence released so far that implicates Huawei in any espionage, Mr Geng said: “We urge the US to stop the unreasonable suppression of Chinese companies, in-

cluding Huawei, and to provide a fair environment for Chinese and American companies to cooperate with each other.”

While US President Donald Trump has taken a more confrontational approach with China than previous administrations, NYT said Huawei is in the US’ cross hairs because of its dominant position in a new global technological arms race to provide the hardware that will power the Internet in the coming decades.

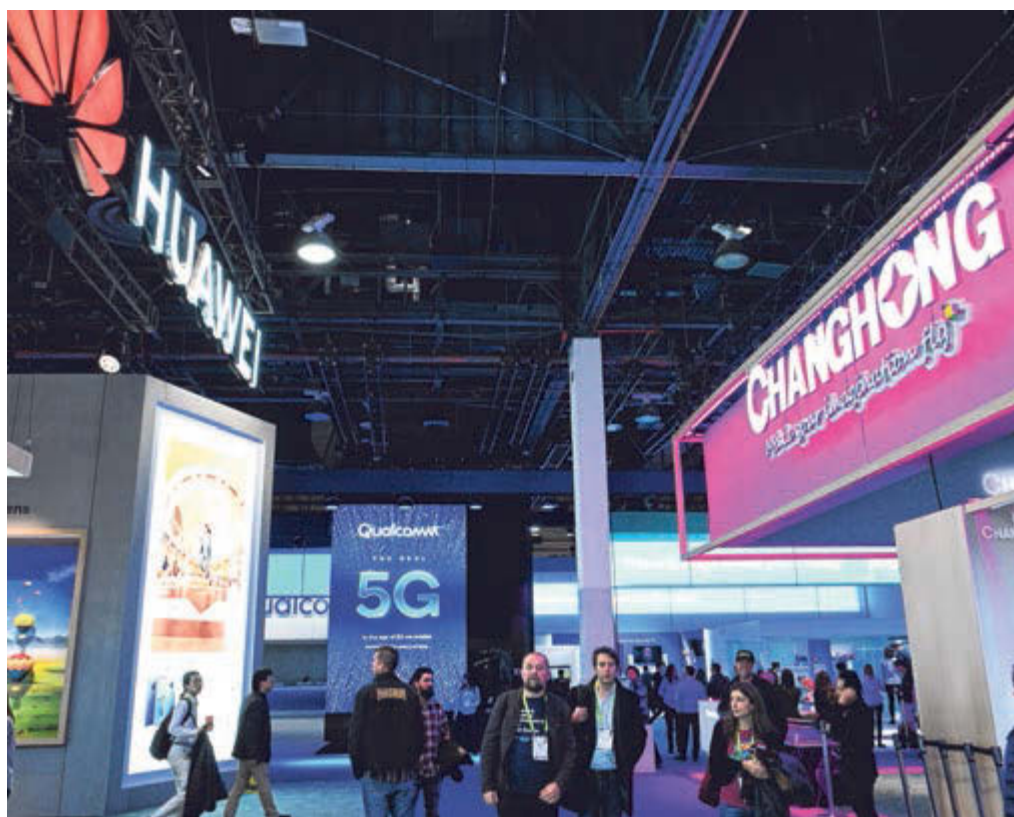
“The administration contends that... whichever country dominates 5G will gain an economic, intelligence and military edge for much of this century,” NYT said.

But the lack of evidence against Huawei has prompted some countries to question whether the US campaign is, in fact, aimed at stopping China from gaining a competitive edge, it added.

Industry experts said Huawei and China are likely to lead the world in 5G technology because of massive investments by both Chinese firms and the state.

Upcoming 5G networks can be up to 1,000 times faster than existing 4G networks, and experts said this will be transformative as it underpins other emerging technologies such as virtual reality and autonomous vehicles.

In a report last year titled “China is poised to win the 5G race”, Ernst & Young (EY) noted that Beijing had, years ago, made 5G R&D part of the national agenda through a series of policies, with the aim of increas-



CALL FOR FAIRNESS

We urge the US to stop the unreasonable suppression of Chinese companies, including Huawei, and to provide a fair environment for Chinese and American companies to cooperate with each other.



MR GENG SHUANG, spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

ing its global influence as well as for economic gain. “EY expects China’s 5G capital expenditure will amount to 1.5 trillion yuan (\$\$300 billion) between 2019 and 2025,” it said.

Huawei has been the most prominent example of China’s drive.

Research analyst Parv Sharma from Counterpoint Research estimated that Chinese firms today own 10 per cent of the world’s core

5G-related patents, with Huawei’s portfolio being the largest. Other major players are the US’ Qualcomm, Sweden’s Ericsson and Finland’s Nokia.

“It (Huawei) is one of the few players which have control over the entire ICT (information and communications technology) value chain,” he said. “With active R&D investment and intellectual property rights, it is becoming a technology giant.”

US intelligence agencies have said implicitly that Huawei’s growing tech dominance and Chinese laws that oblige its tech firms to submit to Beijing have fuelled concerns, and a growing number of Western countries have tightened access to their 5G networks.

The US intelligence community spotlighted emerging and disruptive technology, including 5G, in its worldwide threat assessment report last year. Intelligence officials will appear before the US Senate today to deliver this year’s assessment.

China has repeatedly rejected the US’ allegations as unfounded.

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The booths of Chinese firms Huawei and Changhong at this year’s CES, the world’s largest consumer electronics trade fair, in Las Vegas. Industry experts said Huawei and China are likely to lead the world in 5G technology because of massive investments. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

US-China trade What pivotal talks may yield

WASHINGTON • The United States and China will hold a pivotal round of talks this week in an attempt to end their trade war.

US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping gave their officials until March 1 to work out a deal on “structural changes” to China’s economic model.

Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He will meet US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer in Washington for two days of talks starting tomorrow.

Here is a range of scenarios to consider – and clues to watch for – as the talks begin.

BASE CASE

Even if Mr Lighthizer and Mr Liu reach an agreement this week, it will probably take time to brief the two presidents, then for Mr Trump and Mr Xi to decide if they are satisfied.

Following the last meetings in Beijing, the two sides put out separate statements.

The US acknowledged progress on issues such as purchases of US products, but added that any deal would need to include “ongoing verification and effective enforcement”.

China has called the talks “extensive, in-depth and detailed”.

The broad outlines of a deal are clear at this point.

The Chinese will probably agree to buy more American goods, Beijing may promise to stop stealing intellectual property, and the two sides could develop a workable enforcement system to give the deal teeth.

If officials indicate that they plan to hold another round of talks, that would be a sign that the two sides still think a deal can be done before March 1, even if they are not willing to lay out the whole package.

Another possible outcome, if the two sides agree to meet again, would be an extension to the tariff truce.

BREAKTHROUGH CASE

In the best-case scenario, the Chinese come to the table with an offer on economic reforms that is more ambitious than expected.

That convinces Mr Lighthizer, a China hawk who has said progress with Beijing will take years, that the Chinese are serious about opening up their state-driven model. It could be enough for Mr Trump or the White House to hail a deal in principle. Markets would rally, shrugging off months of anxiety about a global trade war.

The problem is the Chinese would need a game-changing offer that shows they are serious about loosening the grip of the state on the world’s second-biggest economy.

BREAKDOWN CASE

If there is no statement of any kind at the conclusion of talks, look out.

A fiery Trump tweet may not be far behind, expressing frustration with the lack of progress. Mr Trump has walked away before.

In May, the two countries issued a joint statement in which China agreed to increase farm goods and energy exports, and recognised the importance of intellectual property protections.

Within days, the US President rejected the framework and sent his negotiators back to the drawing board. A similar reaction by Mr Trump could put the talks on ice for a long time.

Much will depend on how hawks in his administration – including Mr Lighthizer, White House adviser Peter Navarro and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross – react to China’s offers. BLOOMBERG



Journalists and guests watching a trailer at the launch of Huawei’s new 5G products in Beijing last Thursday. Besides China, countries that are trialling or beginning to roll out national 5G networks this year include South Korea, the United States and Britain. Such networks are expected to cover one-third of the world’s population by 2025. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

5G key for emerging technology

BEIJING • If the Internet is a network of pipes criss-crossing the globe and enabling data flows, 5G is the supersizing of these pipes.

A series of technical standards that will speed up the flow of mobile data as much as a thousand-fold compared with current 4G technology, 5G Internet is envisioned to be faster than even current home broadband connec-

tions, which means a high-definition movie will finish downloading in seconds.

Experts have said that this faster, wireless way to access the Internet will be crucial in realising emerging technologies like autonomous vehicles.

Besides greater speed, 5G also promises reduced lag, which means augmented and virtual reality –

both of which require strong, high-speed connections – will no longer be tethered down by wires.

And 5G networks will bring far greater network capacity and reliability than current technology – which means that more devices can simultaneously access the Internet in the same physical space without hitting a bottleneck – and help usher in an era both of smart

cities and smart homes.

Countries that are trialling or beginning to roll out national 5G networks this year include China, South Korea, the United States and Britain.

And 5G networks are expected to cover one-third of the world’s population by 2025.

Lim Yan Liang

China slowdown: Global impact

Singapore

Concerns over trade flows and investments

Seow Boi Yi
Business Correspondent

Singapore is increasingly feeling the fallout from a slowing economy in China, one of its top destinations for non-oil exports and direct investments abroad.

Analysts said both trade flows and investments in the world's second largest economy could be expected to take a hit, and its slowing growth – at its slowest since 1990 – was likely to last into the first half of the year.

While China is Singapore's biggest single export market, economists said shipments of intermediate components such as electronics – to make products bound for markets like the United States eventually – might be a bigger casualty.

Weighing on China's outlook are external uncertainties such as trade tensions with the US. The outcome of talks with the US would impact over-

all sentiment, and China's growth, said Mr Liang Eng Hwa, chairman of the Government Parliamentary Committee for Finance and Trade and Industry. This would then affect demand for Singapore exports.

The trade war has already clouded the outlook here, with Singapore's non-oil domestic exports to China straying into negative territory in December 2017, and contracting for seven consecutive months last year, before turning around last month.

A lot of the data showed considerable weakening in the trade flows through Asia, including Singapore, said ING chief economist Robert Carnell. "If you start to damage that, you're...damaging Singapore's economy." Indirectly, industries such as those in the service sector – insurance, logistics, banking – will be affected as well, he added.

While Singapore's non-oil exports to China rebounded last month, he said this could have been an effect

offrontloading of goods to avoid further US tariffs, and the numbers could reverse course again.

Negative headlines and economic and trade concerns could also be contagious, influencing how investors view Asia overall. When portfolio investors minimise their exposure to the region, they might not differentiate between individual Asian economies, said OCBC Bank's head of treasury research and strategy Selena Ling, although South-east Asia could also benefit if foreign direct investment is diversified from China to South-east Asia.

UOB senior economist Suan Teck Kin suggested that observers could be less pessimistic about Chinese growth figures. "So long as China's growth is slowing down in an orderly manner and not in an off-the-cliff situation, the market will still be there for you," he said.

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Australia

Analysts look to possible stimulus programme

Jonathan Pearlman
For The Straits Times
In Sydney

The prospect of a Chinese slowdown has brought about little panic in Australia, where analysts believe it will lead to a stimulus package that will ensure strong demand for Australian resources.

The Australian economy is deeply reliant on its booming trade with China, which accounted last year for an extraordinary 24.4 per cent of Australia's trade, or A\$195 billion (\$264 billion). This was almost as much as the amount of the entire trade with Australia's next three biggest partners: Japan, the United States and South Korea.

Most analysts feel China will unveil a stimulus programme to boost activity that could involve infrastructure spending, thus adding to demand for Australian commodities.

China is a major customer of Aus-

tralia's two biggest exports, iron ore and coal, which account for 31 per cent of Australian exports. Economist Gareth Aird of the Commonwealth Bank remained "relatively upbeat" about China's economy, saying Beijing would probably increase efforts to support lagging sectors. "As such, we see Australia's key commodity prices remaining well supported in 2019," he told Business Insider Australia.

However, a weaker Chinese economy could take a toll on the surging numbers of tourists and students who visit Australia each year. International students bring in more than A\$30 billion annually to the economy. And China was the source of 30 per cent of Australia's international student numbers, with over 200,000 last year.

China is also the biggest source of tourists, with more than 1.4 million arrivals last year, worth about A\$11.5 billion to the economy.

Also tempering the optimism is

the view that China's slowdown is part of a worrying global trend which includes rising international debt, the United States-China trade war and weakening in Europe.

When the global economy last faltered in 2007-2008, Australia's economy was buffeted by a mining boom fuelled by Chinese demand. But China's current slowdown, even with its stimulus, has prompted concerns that it will not be able to rescue Australia again in the event of a broader meltdown, and it would be less able to propel a global recovery.

"It's crucial to Australia's resource exports that China keeps building," said an editorial in The Australian Financial Review. "But each shot of top-down stimulus is becoming less effective... In the short term, the rest of the world can't rely on the Chinese engine to pull it out of trouble as it has done before."

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WAKING A DOZING DRAGON

Last week, China announced that its economic growth fell to 6.6 per cent, its lowest in 28 years. The Straits Times looks at what this means for Asia and the rest of the world.

Chong Koh Ping
China Correspondent
In Shanghai

China's economy is slowing down and everyone is counting on the government to do something about it.

While the spotlight has been on its ongoing trade war with the United States and the adverse effects on the economy of nearly 1.4 billion consumers, analysts generally agree that domestic pressures played a larger role in curbing growth to 6.6 per cent last year, the slowest since 1990.

Retail sales dropped to their slowest pace in 15 years, led by a slump in car sales, and property prices have also stopped inching upwards. Factory production has shrunk, as have exports and imports.

Analysts expect the downward trajectory to continue until the second half, when the impact of government stimulus kicks in.

But the initial efforts to inject more cash into the economy, through successive cuts to cash reserves banks must hold, have not found many takers, said analysts, with banks afraid to lend and businesses afraid to borrow.

They fear this loosening would be a repeat of moves made 10 years ago to flood the markets with four trillion yuan (\$620 billion) worth of stimulus, which boosted credit but dried up quickly.

While policymakers have, in recent weeks, affirmed government support for the economy, they have also stressed that such efforts will be targeted and measured. iFast Financial China research analyst Ian Li noted that the age of high-speed growth for China has passed and as it pursues higher-quality growth,

the economy will slow steadily.

"It will still maintain a mid-to-high growth rate and will not result in a hard landing," said Mr Li.

UOB economist Suan Teck Kin noted that China's slower 6.6 per cent growth is a percentage of a much larger economy of some 90 trillion yuan in 2018.

Last year, China added some 7.29 trillion yuan of demand, whereas in 2009, it added 3.5 trillion yuan, even though it enjoyed a much higher growth rate of 8.7 per cent. The total size of the economy was 33.5 trillion yuan then.

"We have to see these numbers in perspective. Growth now has a larger impact per percentage point because the base is larger," said Mr Suan.

Still, worries are brewing on the ground about job losses.

Reports of mass layoffs at Internet companies prompted the state planner to deny them at a press conference last Tuesday. National Development and Reform Commission spokesman Meng Wei told reporters that jobs could be affected "to some extent" by the slowing economy, but China had the tools and confidence to deal with the risks and stabilise employment.

In Hong Kong, ING economist Iris Pang said a slowing China would inevitably have a knock-on effect on the local economy. "Housing prices are falling and the export sector is feeling the heat from the trade war. Retail sales are slowing and could fall to contraction," she said.

OCBC Wing Hang economist Carrie Li noted that Hong Kong's three pillar industries of trade, tourism and finance are closely linked with China and make up almost half of Hong Kong's total employment. "This means that hiring



Above: Empty barges moored on the Yangtze River near the Jingtuan Copper smelter in Tongling, in Anhui province. Factory production has shrunk, and analysts expect the downward trajectory to continue. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG
Top: A woman looking at job advertisements on a wall in Qingdao, in Shandong province. Reports of mass layoffs at Internet companies prompted the state planner to deny them at a press conference last week. PHOTO: REUTERS



A man waiting to deliver goods in Shenzhen, in Guangdong province. Export growth in cities in Guangdong has slowed more than the rest of China. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

sentiments could worsen should the slowing growth of China cloud the pillar industries' outlook.

"We expect the unemployment rate of these industries to go up while the overall jobless rate will increase towards 3 per cent this year. Wage prospects could also turn bleak," she said.

Export growth in cities in Guangdong province has slowed more than the rest of China, indicating

the trade war has reached the Greater Bay Area, she said.

As advanced manufacturing and high-tech industries concentrated in the area rely heavily on internal and external demand, it may be harder hit by China's slowdown.

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Additional reporting by Claire Huang, Hong Kong correspondent

Philippines

Little impact, maybe even some gains

Raul Dancel
Philippines Correspondent
In Manila

China's slowdown will not have much of an impact on the "relatively closed" Philippine economy, unless it spooks investors to retreat en masse from Asia.

"The biggest impact could be through contagion," London-based research firm Capital Economics said last week.

According to its report, the Philippines, along with Pakistan, India and Indonesia, would be "hit hardest" by China-induced capital outflows, if investor sentiment shifted elsewhere.

China's sluggish economy may also stall Beijing's pledges to support the Philippines' US\$108 billion (S\$146 billion) infrastructure push. But those run up to just US\$24 billion. The Philippines is instead lin-

ing up new taxes and loans to finance much of the cost of highways, railways, airports, piers and bridges it plans to build in the next 10 years.

Overall, the Philippine economy "remains robust", Ms Eugenia Vic-torino, head of Asia strategy at Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken, told Bloomberg. "Amid rising risks on external demand, the Philippines' strong domestic demand will provide a significant cushion."

The Philippine economy grew 6.1 per cent in the fourth quarter from a year earlier, up slightly from the previous quarter's 6 per cent. It will continue to be fuelled by consumer spending, rather than exports and manufacturing, which makes it less vulnerable to China's troubles.

"Our weakness has become our strength. We are not export-oriented like our neighbours," said University of Asia and the Pacific economist Bernardo Villegas.

The Philippines exported US\$4.09 billion worth of goods, mostly electronic products, to China last year. But that accounted for just 3.2 per cent of its gross domestic product.

Mr Ernesto Pernia, the country's chief economic planner, even sees a silver lining in the trade war between China and the US. He expects Philippine exports to grow 5 per cent, as the US looks for other sources of electronics and computer components and shifts to alternative supply chains.

Tourists from China, meanwhile, are still making a beeline for the Philippines, despite falling wages and soaring costs back home.

Over a million Chinese visited the Philippines in the first 11 months of last year, 30 per cent more than a year earlier.

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India

Dumping a worry but opportunities abound

Nirmala Ganapathy
India Bureau Chief
In New Delhi

The Chinese slowdown would have a limited impact on India, with concerns centring mainly on how it could hurt the export of raw materials and whether it would lead to a dumping of Chinese products in India and other countries, said economists and analysts.

Economic ties between the two are growing. China is India's largest trade partner, with trade reaching US\$89.7 billion (S\$121.4 billion) in 2017-2018. But a widening trade gap has been a cause of worry for India, which had a trade deficit with China of US\$63.05 billion in the same period.

As India imports more than it ex-

ports, economists said the impact would be limited to trade flows.

"India imports (US\$76.3 billion in FY2018) more from China than it exports (US\$3.3 billion in FY2018) and hence any slowdown in China will not have a major bearing on our trade. In fact, China would be more aggressive with its exports and we need to be watchful with such flows," said Mr Madan Sabharwal, chief economist at CARE Ratings, a rating agency. "They would also push their exports to other markets where they compete with India, and hence there is a need for more proactive policies on exports from our side."

Growth in India is predicted to rise from 7.4 per cent in 2018 to 7.6 per cent in 2019 and 7.4 per cent in 2020, according to a United Nations report.

Some analysts also see opportuni-

ties for India, including the possibility of encouraging Chinese companies to shift manufacturing and investments to India for products they sell here. India is a huge market for Chinese products like solar panels, wind turbines and low-cost phones.

"There will be a global impact on India but we can use this as an opportunity. We can get Chinese investment and capital for long-term infrastructure projects. We can use both Chinese expertise and efficiency," said Mr Rishi Sahai, managing director of the investment bank, Cogence Advisors. But Prof Biswajit Dhar of Jawaharlal Nehru University said this depended on "political sentiment" about allowing Chinese investments in areas considered sensitive, like ports.

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Malaysia

Manufacturing sector to feel the heat

Trinna Leong
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In Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's ongoing reliance on manufacturing as an anchor for its economy in the days of low commodity prices may end, with double headwinds this year challenging the manufacturing and commodity sectors.

Economists see countries like Malaysia feeling the impact of China's slowdown and a protracted US-China trade war, because of its position within the global manufacturing supply chain for the electronics industry.

"China is not only our biggest trade partner, China last year. The world's largest export market and our second biggest import source after Singapore. This could bring negative ramifications not only to Malaysia but also to other peers like Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines and hence, the growth

prospects of Asean-5," wrote Publicis Research in a report last week.

With a slowing economy, the World Bank forecasts Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP) to grow at 4.7 per cent this year, unchanged from 2018.

The most obvious indicator so far of the impact from China's slowdown has been slower industrial production growth in November last year, attributed to a deceleration in manufacturing. The manufacturing purchasing manager's index also edged lower for the third successive month in December, pointing to weaker demand. Latest numbers show that Malaysia's exports of electrical and electronics fell in November. With China taking up 30 per cent of Malaysia's electronic exports, cooling demand from China would no doubt affect Malaysia's semiconductor industry.

"Exporters will earn less and this will translate to reductions in capital expenditure, hiring and investments," said Mr Wan Suhaimi Wan Mohd Saidie of Kenanga Investment Bank. "In fact, companies may retrench workers."

How Malaysian businesses fare in 2019 is also dependent on their ability to sell to other countries besides China, said Sunway University Business School's Yeah Kim Leng.

"The extent to which their sales will be affected partly depends on the extent to which they can find replacement markets," said Dr Yeah. Still, Malaysia's central bank in its recent monetary policy statement said that "for 2019, domestic demand will remain the key driver of growth", citing stable employment and rising wages.

But for months now, local bosses have been grumbling about the slowing economy, and it is unlikely that a silver lining is to be seen any time soon.

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South Korea

Less-than-rosy outlook for chipmakers

Chang May Choon
South Korea Correspondent
In Seoul

The export-reliant economies of South Korea and Japan are expected to be "badly affected" when exports for the impact of China's economic deceleration this year.

South Korea shipped a record-high US\$162.2 billion (S\$220 billion) worth of goods to its largest trade partner, China, last year. The 14.2 per cent on-year increase was driven by a surge in demand for memory chips, computers, machinery and petroleum goods.

The world's two largest chipmakers – Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix – are based in South Korea.

But the outlook for 2019 is not as rosy. Official data shows that the volume of exports to China – which accounts for one quarter of South Korea's total trade – plunged by nearly 14 per cent last month.

Expecting the downward trend

to continue, analysts have urged chipmakers to diversify and invest in other areas.

Dr Kang Hyun-ju, research fellow at local think-tank Korea Capital Market Institute, said South Korea will be "badly affected" when exports to China – which account for 30 per cent of total trade – shrink further. "China's slowdown will be the biggest threat to the South Korean economy," he told The Straits Times.

South Korea's central bank has cut the country's growth forecast by 0.1 percentage point to 2.6 per cent, citing the rise in external uncertainties. South Korean President Moon Jae-in is keen to boost the economy and encourage innovation as a key driver of growth.

But economist Katrina Eil of Moody's Analytics warned: "Korea's domestic demand is mediocre at best and while the government has made targeted efforts to improve the labour market and shore up broader employment prospects,

it has made little headway."

In Japan, exports to China – its biggest overseas market – have also tumbled as the US-China trade war has reduced demand for chipmaking machinery and communications equipment. Japan exported US\$12.86 billion worth of goods to China in 2017. Official data shows shipments to China fell 7 per cent last month, compared with a year ago.

Analysts have raised concerns that the trade war would hit Japanese firms the most, as they add value to almost 16 per cent of products sold by China to the US. This is higher than South Korea's 9 per cent and Taiwan's 7 per cent. "Japanese businesses will be particularly hard-hit by a slump in Chinese exports," Tokyo-based economist Koza Koide told Nikkei Asian Review.

The Bank of Japan predicted 0.9 per cent growth for the economy this year.

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Jakarta on dengue alert as outbreak spreads in Indonesia

Disease has killed over 100 in country this year; 4 regions declare health emergencies

Linda Yulisman
Indonesia Correspondent
In Jakarta

Jakarta is on alert as cases of dengue fever have surged in recent weeks, claiming more than 100 lives across Indonesia since the start of the year.

The country's Health Ministry said yesterday that more than 9,600 people in 372 cities and regencies have been struck by the mosquito-borne disease as of last weekend, with four regions – Kupang and West Manggarai regency in East Nusa Tenggara, Kapuas regency in Central Kalimantan and North Sulawesi province – declaring health emergencies.

Capital city Jakarta has not recorded any fatality but saw about 430 cases in the first three weeks of this year, nearly four times the 111 cases recorded in the same period last year.

The authorities said the dengue outbreak is due to the rainy season, and that efforts will be made to ramp up vector control, or mosquito eradication, by fogging, covering drains and other methods to stave off mosquito breeding.

Jakarta's health agency chief Widyastuti said that as of Sunday, the city of over 10 million people has seen 613 cases but no death from dengue.

For the full month of January last year, the city witnessed only 198 cases, much lower than in January 2017, when cases numbered 665.

"We've declared this 'alert' status, which means that if we do nothing, the figure will continue to climb," Ms Widyastuti, who goes by one name, told reporters in a briefing yesterday.

She attributed this year's outbreak to the higher humidity from the severe rainy season. Heavy rains are forecast to continue across several regions in the country, including Jakarta, until the end of this month.

Jakarta recorded over 3,300 dengue cases with one fatality in 2017 and nearly 3,000 cases with two fatalities last year.

Ms Widyastuti said that the health agency has stepped up efforts to destroy mosquito breeding grounds, including burying, draining and covering objects that may store water, spraying larvicide and deploying a 30,000-strong team of volunteers to check for mosquito larva across various locations in the city, including in schools.

The agency has also raised its surveillance of areas where dengue fever has struck, using online data reported by more than 160 hospitals and community health centres in the city, and carrying out fogging to kill adult mosquitoes carrying the dengue virus and breaking their breeding cycle.

Last week, Jakarta governor Anies Baswedan voiced his concern over the dengue outbreak, calling the increase in cases "a serious threat" to the capital.

"This is very important. We have already instructed all health-related working units and *jumantik* (volunteer mosquito larvae controllers) to control the vectors of dengue fever," he was quoted as saying by The Jakarta Post.

He added that his office is drafting a directive on how the outbreak should be handled and a map showing the location of dengue cases to curb the viral infection.

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9,600

Number of people across 372 cities and regencies who have caught dengue as of Jan 26.



Supporters of former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama celebrating his release from prison last Thursday. Mr Basuki is being accused of making the Muslim woman he plans to marry commit apostasy. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Ahok criticised on social media by Muslims over planned marriage

Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja
Indonesia Correspondent
In Jakarta

Former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, who was released from prison just last week after serving a two-year sentence for blaspheming Islam, is now being attacked by critics over another hot-button issue.

The Chinese-Christian politician is being criticised on social media by Muslims, who say he is making the Muslim woman he plans to marry commit apostasy.

Other Muslims, however, have defended Mr Basuki, arguing that no

one should meddle with his personal life, and that everyone has the right to follow any religion.

Mr Basuki, 52, popularly known as Ahok, has said he plans to remarry. The bride-to-be – who comes from a Javanese Muslim family – is Ms Puput Nastiti Devi, 21, who used to be a policewoman and aide to Mr Basuki's former wife.

Mr Basuki battled corruption and improved healthcare when he was governor of Indonesia's capital city between 2014 and 2017.

Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim population, does not recognise marriage between a man and woman from different religions. In many cases, one converts

to the other's religion, or they travel to another country to get married.

The brouhaha surrounding Mr Basuki's planned marriage started not long after a video showing Ms Puput and himself singing at a service led by a Christian pastor went viral. The thanksgiving service was held last Thursday, when Mr Basuki was freed from prison, and attended by family and close friends.

News portal Kumparan.com reported that the couple's pre-marriage documentation identified Ms Puput as a Christian. Another site, vivanews.com, reported that the couple would tie the knot in a Christian wedding.

Mr Basuki divorced his former

Commenting on reports that Mr Basuki is marrying a Muslim woman, Islam-based United Development Party politician Andi Soedirman said Muslims would have even less sympathy for Mr Basuki if he went ahead with the plan to marry her. But he added that Ms Puput has the legal right to convert.

wife Veronica Tan last year, after more than 20 years of marriage.

The divorce came a year after a Jakarta court sentenced him in May 2017 to two years' jail, after finding him guilty of insulting Islam – a verdict widely seen as being caused by political pressure from conservative Muslim groups.

Neither Mr Basuki nor Ms Puput has spoken about the alleged conversion.

Commenting on reports that Mr Basuki is marrying a Muslim woman, Islam-based United Development Party politician Andi Soedirman said Muslims would have even less sympathy for Mr Basuki if he went ahead with the plan to marry her. But he added that Ms Puput has the legal right to convert.

The issue has divided opinion on social media. Twitter user David Ridwan, in a post, said: "Ahok is initiating very dangerous and controversial debates again. This looks like Ahok is taking revenge, by way of making a Muslim woman commit apostasy."

Another Twitter user, Mr Jeffery Coumbour, said: "Ahok, I am very disappointed... You should marry a woman of your own religion."

Others defended Mr Basuki. Indonesian artist Sudiwo Tedjo, who has a large Twitter following, said: "I am not a fan of Ahok but I am OK with a would-be bride of Ahok or any body converting before marriage."

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Drug-smuggling suspects paraded as contraband is destroyed



Suspected drug smugglers being brought out to the media as personnel from Indonesia's anti-narcotics agency burned some 515kg of confiscated marijuana at a public ceremony in Banda Aceh yesterday. DPA news agency reported that hundreds of people watched the destruction of the contraband, which was seized from a local drug ring a month ago. Aceh is known as the main source of cannabis in Indonesia. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Abe pledges to meet Kim to 'break shell of mutual distrust'

TOKYO • Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe vowed to "break the shell of mutual distrust" with North Korea by meeting leader Kim Jong Un face to face and restoring diplomatic relations between the two historic foes.

In a major policy speech to mark the opening of Parliament yesterday, Mr Abe also vowed to push Sino-Japan ties "to a new stage" and pledged a record budget to improve crumbling infrastructure in the world's third-biggest economy.

"I will act resolutely, never failing to seize every opportunity to break the shell of mutual distrust, and I myself will directly face Chairman Kim Jong Un... to resolve North Korea's

nuclear and missile issues, as well as the abductions issue," Mr Abe said.

The abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea in the 1970s and 1980s remains a highly emotive issue for Japan.

Mr Abe gave no timeframe for a potential meeting with the North Korean leader but the comments came as Mr Kim ordered preparation for a second summit with US President Donald Trump, likely towards the end of next month.

"I will aim at diplomatic normalisation by settling the unfortunate past," Mr Abe said, using a Japanese diplomatic euphemism referring to harm caused by Japan during its brutal colonisation of the Korean peninsula

before and during World War II.

North Korea has given no public indication of any willingness to meet Mr Abe, while Pyongyang's state media regularly excoriates Japan over its past history and Mr Abe for ramping up defence spending.

On China, Mr Abe said ties had "completely returned to a normal path" after he visited President Xi Jinping in Beijing last year. Mr Xi is expected to make his first official visit to Japan this year.

"I will strongly pursue diplomaticity with neighbours for a new era... in order to make north-east Asia truly a land of stable peace and prosperity," he said.

Bilateral ties were harmed in

FACING THE PAST

I will aim at diplomatic normalisation by settling the unfortunate past.



MR SHINZO ABE, Japan's Prime Minister, using a Japanese diplomatic euphemism referring to harm caused by Japan during its brutal colonisation of the Korean peninsula before and during World War II.

2012 when Tokyo "nationalised" disputed islands in the East China Sea also claimed by Beijing. Until recently, neither nation had made much effort to repair relations.

But Japan's business community has long urged Mr Abe to improve ties with China, Tokyo's largest trade partner as well as the biggest source of foreign tourists, who are collectively becoming a key driver of the country's chronically fragile economy.

Tokyo believes a successful visit by Mr Xi is key to a productive Group of 20 meeting, which Japan hosts this year, and hopes the Chinese leader will attend the 2020 Olympic Games.

Mr Abe was cautious about Russia, amid a territorial row over tiny islands to Japan's north that has proved difficult to resolve despite frequent meetings with President Vladimir Putin.

Domestically, Mr Abe vowed to press ahead with an upcoming consumption tax hike from the current 8 per cent to 10 per cent from October.

He also pledged a whopping seven trillion yen (\$86.6 billion) on infrastructure spending, as the nation's many roads and bridges become dilapidated and Japan routinely faces serious natural disasters such as flooding and earthquakes. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KL to announce ECRL decision this week after mixed messages

But concern grows over Beijing's possible retaliation should rail project be cancelled

Leslie Lopez
Regional Correspondent
In Kuala Lumpur

After a week of embarrassing flip-flopping, the Malaysian government is due to make a definitive announcement this week on whether it will proceed with the multibillion-dollar East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) project.

But the lack of a unified response so far from Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's Cabinet signals concerns and disagreements within the administration over the pushback from Beijing that might be triggered by a cancellation.

The Straits Times reported last week that the government had cancelled the original contract with the state-owned China Communications Construction Company (CCCC).

Government officials close to the situation noted that on Jan 18, the Finance Ministry issued a letter to Malaysia Rail Link, the state-owned entity that will own and operate the ECRL, to cancel the project with immediate effect. The letter also instructed Malaysia Rail Link to communicate the government decision to CCCC and Export-Import Bank of China (Exim Bank of China), the officials said.

Yet, upon his return from an overseas trip last week, Tun Dr Mahathir said he was unaware of the government's decision to scrap the project.

Then, over the weekend, Economic Affairs Minister Azmin Ali told reporters that the Malaysian Cabinet had decided to terminate the project and insisted that the decision was final.

Hours later, Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng, whose ministry is-

sued the first letter terminating the project, responded that Datuk Seri Azmin was mistaken and that the final statement on the status of the project would be issued in the coming days.

Yesterday, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said he had no knowledge of the actual circumstances surrounding the project.

A core part of the internal disagreement in Kuala Lumpur allegedly centres on the risk of hurting an already-sluggish domestic economy.

Beijing could retaliate in a number of ways should Malaysia proceed with its plans to cancel the RM55 billion (S\$18.1 billion) project, government officials and senior construction industry executives note.

At the very least, China - Malaysia's largest trading partner - could get tough by suspending large annual contracted purchases of Malaysian palm oil, a move that would hurt large Malaysian state-controlled entities such as financially strapped FELDA. Bernama re-

ported that in 2017, Malaysia exported 2.87 million tonnes of palm oil and palm oil derivatives worth RM9.42 billion to China.

More punishing for Malaysia would be if the Chinese were to make a full-blown declaration of a default on the project that was awarded by the previous government in October 2016 to CCCC, with financing from Exim Bank of China.

Senior government officials and industry executives familiar with the ECRL contract noted that CCCC and Exim Bank of China could demand compensation and penalties amounting to as much as RM19.53 billion. What's more, failure to settle the Exim Bank of China loans could lead to complications in other similar loans taken by the Malaysian government, senior industry executives and bankers said.

Shortly after wresting power in the May 2018 General Election, Dr Mahathir's Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition government carried out a review on large projects undertaken with China by the previous Barisan Nasional government.

More punishing for Malaysia would be if the Chinese were to make a full-blown declaration of a default on the project... Senior government officials and industry executives familiar with the ECRL contract noted that CCCC and Exim Bank of China could demand compensation and penalties amounting to as much as RM19.53 billion.

Malaysian officials allege that many of the contract awards were inflated in terms of value and riddled with repayment terms that were hugely unfavourable to Malaysia.

PH moved to temporarily suspend the mammoth deals, which included construction of the 688km ECRL network, stretching from north-east Kelantan to Port Klang on the west coast, and two multibillion-dollar gas pipeline projects.

Senior government officials familiar with discussions with Beijing over the issue said Beijing has consistently taken the position that it would not accept a termination of the ECRL project because it formed an integral part of its One Belt, One Road network and that it ranked as the single-largest project in Southeast Asia under the ambitious plan. China was, however, open to continuing the project on revised terms.

Public perception of the ECRL took a further hit three weeks ago after The Wall Street Journal reported that the Chinese government had allegedly offered the previous government a bailout of scandal-tarred state investment firm 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) in return for the ECRL and gas pipeline projects.

The report cited minutes from previously undisclosed meetings.

Reacting to the report, Dr Mahathir said the Malaysian government was not aware of the minutes of the meetings.

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Muddy setback for competitor in 'Tough Guy' event



A competitor in a muddy pool during the Tough Guy endurance event near Wolverhampton, central England, on Sunday. The Tough Guy event challenges hundreds of participants to run a gruelling 15km course while negotiating up to 300 obstacles including water, fire and tunnels, often in freezing winter conditions. It consists of a cross-country run including many slalom runs up and down a hill, over 2m-deep mud and water-filled ditches, log jumps, followed by an assault course. The competition is claimed to be tougher than any other publicly accessible worldwide: It features obstacles through, under and over freezing water pools, over fire pits, rope bridges and nets. The organisers claim that running the course involves risking barbed wire, cuts, scrapes, burns, dehydration, hypothermia, acrophobia, claustrophobia, electric shocks, sprains, twists, joint dislocation and broken bones. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Man nabbed over brazen theft from Moscow museum

MOSCOW • A man who snatched a 19th century painting off the wall in a busy Moscow museum and calmly walked out has been arrested, the authorities said yesterday.

The suspect took a Crimean landscape work by Russian artist Arkhip Kuindzhi and carried it through a room filled with visitors on Sunday evening, footage aired on state television showed. It is the second security incident to hit the capital's Tretyakov Gallery in a year, after a visitor in May seriously damaged a painting of Ivan the Terrible.

The Russian Interior Ministry said a 31-year-old man was detained yesterday in a village outside Moscow. He admitted hiding the painting in a construction site, where it was recovered.

The painting, depicting the Ai-Petri mountain in Crimea, was completed between 1898 and 1908.

The ministry published a video of his arrest that showed armed police holding the man to the floor and recovering the painting, which appeared not to be damaged.

The authorities said the man had previously been charged with drug possession and was currently not allowed to leave Russia. Police are investigating if he had accomplices.

"At the time of the theft, the museum's security - carried out by forces of the National Guard and the museum's security service - was working normally," the gallery said. "Security measures at the Arkhip Kuindzhi exhibition and all sites of the Tretyakov Gallery have been strengthened."

The Kremlin yesterday said the gallery is "protected at a proper level", but added that "conclusions must be drawn". It also praised the law enforcement authorities for recovering the painting. "Thank God, thanks to the energetic efforts of our law enforcement officers, the painting was found quickly and efficiently," a Kremlin spokesman said.

The theft comes after a man slashed a painting by celebrated Russian artist Ilya Repin, depicting 16th-century czar Ivan the Terrible after he killed his son. Police arrested a 37-year-old who used a metal pole to break the glass covering the picture, damaging the work in three places.

The gallery is currently hosting an exhibition with more than 120 Kuindzhi paintings that will run until Feb 17. On its website, the gallery calls Kuindzhi, who died in 1910, "one of the most memorable figures in Russian painting of the second half of the 19th century".

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Above: Screen grabs from video footage show a man walking away with a painting at Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow on Sunday. Left: The Arkhip Kuindzhi painting was recovered yesterday undamaged. PHOTOS: REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Anwar: PH needs to fulfil election promises

PETALING JAYA • A top leader of Malaysia's ruling alliance Pakatan Harapan (PH) has stressed the importance of fulfilling its election promises, along with managing economic issues and racial ties in the aftermath of its first by-election defeat last week, since storming to power eight months ago.

"I believe this result will be a reminder to the leaders of Pakatan that we must be aware of the people's frustrations with regard to the economy and cost of living," Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said in a statement on Sunday. "We must work harder to fulfil the GE14 (last general election's) manifesto and handle issues of race or religion for the good of all."

The opposition Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition won by a big margin in the Cameron Highlands by-election on Saturday, its first victory after losing in four previous by-elections since the May general election.

BN leaders saw the victory as a referendum on the "poor" performance of PH since it came to power, especially the failure to fulfil several of its election promises, such as reducing the cost of living and removing highway tolls. Other BN leaders say the results showed that Malay voters are solidly behind BN, which is led by Malay nationalist party Umno.

BN candidate Ramli Mohd Nor, 61, won with 12,038 votes to the 8,800 votes polled by the PH's Manogaran Marimuthu. Independent candidates Wong Seng Yee and Sallehudin Ab Talib received 276 and 314 votes, respectively. The turnout was 68.8 per cent, with 21,428 votes tallied and 568 spoilt votes.

Mr Ramli's 3,238-vote majority is a sharp increase from the 597-vote margin secured by BN's C. Sivaraman in the 14th General Election.

Meanwhile, other PH leaders chose to look to the positive side of the loss, saying BN and its ally Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) had simply retained the same level of support, while PH received an increase in the percentage of votes.

PH leader and Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng said the four-party alliance secured 3 percentage points more votes in Cameron Highlands than in the last general election.

"I don't see how Barisan can take this as a big success because Cameron Highlands has always been a Barisan stronghold," said Mr Khalid Abdul Samad, the communications director of PH component Parti Amanah Negara.

THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Trump adamant border wall will be built

President could shutter govt again or declare emergency to get funds, says his chief of staff

WASHINGTON • The committee of lawmakers crafting a plan for the southern United States border is expected to start meeting this week, even as a defiant President Donald Trump made clear he will not take “no” for an answer in his effort to construct a border wall.

“Does anybody really think I won’t build the WALL?” Mr Trump said late on Sunday in a tweet that listed what he termed as more success in two years than any other president.

Mr Trump’s acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney said earlier that Mr

Trump was prepared to shutter the government again or declare an emergency if needed to get the wall funding.

The first formal meeting of the Homeland Security Appropriations House-Senate conference committee will be held tomorrow, according to a senior Democratic aide. The committee was created last Friday after a deal was struck to end a record 35-day partial government shutdown.

While Mr Trump does not want to close the government or declare an emergency to secure the funding

he wants for a border wall, he is prepared to do so if he and congressional leaders cannot strike a deal, Mr Mulvaney said on Sunday.

“He’s willing to do whatever it takes to secure the border,” said Mr Mulvaney on CBS’ Face The Nation, one of his two appearances on Sunday talk shows.

“What he wants to do is fix this the way that things are supposed to get fixed with our government, which is through legislation.”

Mr Mulvaney said on Fox News Sunday that Mr Trump will insist on a “wall where we need it the most and where we need it the quickest” that is not “a 2,000 mile sea-to-shining-sea wall”.

He did not say whether the President would take less than the US\$5.7

billion (\$\$7.8 billion) he has been demanding in order to ink a deal.

Mr Trump agreed last Friday to reopen the government after the partial shutdown that began on Dec 22 when he and congressional Democrats were deadlocked on the President’s demands.

Mr Trump accepted a deal to continue funding for the shuttered departments – without money for a wall – until Feb 15 to allow for bipartisan negotiations on a border security plan.

He was criticised by immigration hardliners for Friday’s move, and is likely to face more pushback if he comes up empty-handed again on wall funding.

Mr Mulvaney travelled to the Camp David presidential retreat in

Maryland at the weekend to work on immigration and border issues, according to three people with knowledge of the matter.

But a leadership aide said on Sunday there have not been negotiations yet on border security and so far, Democratic leaders are not budging in opposing money for a wall.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said last Friday they are confident an accord can be reached.

While they continued to insist there will be no funding for a border wall, they pointed to bipartisan support for border security and the potential for funding other areas of immigration enforcement in a compromise.

House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy suggested that a deal combining money for a border wall and protecting so-called Dreamers – young, undocumented immigrants who were brought to the US as children – should be pursued.

“They’re both big issues; solve them right now,” Mr McCarthy said on Sunday on NBC.

That same day, Mr Trump tweeted about allegations of voter fraud in Texas, the cost of illegal immigration and his new slogan, “build a wall and crime will fall”.

A sizeable majority of Americans also think the US is headed in the wrong direction, according to a new NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll taken before the shutdown ended. BLOOMBERG

Senator Kamala Harris officially launching her campaign for the presidency in her hometown of Oakland, California, on Sunday. Ms Harris joins a Democratic field with several other candidates seeking to keep President Donald Trump out of the White House for a second term. PHOTO: REUTERS



Senator launches bid to be US’ first black female president

OAKLAND (California) • Lamenting that the American Dream and its democracy are under attack in President Donald Trump’s United States, California Senator Kamala Harris formally declared on Sunday her candidacy to become the country’s first black female president in 2020.

Ms Harris, who was California’s attorney-general from 2011 to 2017, made her announcement to supporters outside city hall in Oakland, San Francisco’s grittier neighbour, where she was born.

Mr Barack Obama introduced himself to Californian voters in 2007 in the same location before he was elected the first African-American president of the United States a year later.

Ms Harris already announced in a Jan 21 video that she would run for president. She joins a Democratic field with several other candidates seeking to keep Mr Trump out of the White House for a second term.

“We are here because the Ameri-

can Dream and our American democracy are under attack and on the line like never before,” she said.

“When democratic values are under attack around the globe, when authoritarianism is on the march, when nuclear proliferation is on the rise, when we have foreign powers infecting the White House like malware, let’s speak the truth,” she added to raucous applause.

Without naming the President, she directly targeted the divisive policies of his unconventional ad-

ministration. Ms Harris, whose father is from Jamaica and whose mother is a Tamil Indian, said that “in the face of powerful forces trying to sow hate and division among us, the truth is that as Americans, we have so much more in common than what separates us”.

Mr Trump regularly tries to equate illegal immigrants with crime and gangs, and his stand-off with Democrats in Congress over funding for a wall on the Mexican border led to a record, nearly five-week shutdown of parts of the government. “The President’s mediaeval vanity project is not going to stop them,” Ms Harris said of transnational gangs.

She also attacked Mr Trump’s failed policy that put migrant children “in cages” after separating them from their parents.

“Don’t you dare call that border

security. That’s a human rights abuse!” she said.

Referring to racist-inspired deadly violence in the country, Ms Harris said “that’s not our America”, and neither is it when “we have leaders who bully and attack a free press and undermine our democratic institutions”.

Mr Trump regularly dismisses as “fake news” reports that cast him in a critical light, and has called some journalists the “enemy of the people”.

Ms Harris joins Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, Hawaii congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and former housing secretary Julian Castro, among others, who are either in the race or exploring a run for the 2020 Democratic nomination. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Misinformation woes could multiply with ‘deepfake’ videos

WASHINGTON • If you see a video of a politician speaking words he never would utter, or a Hollywood star improbably appearing in a cheap adult movie, do not adjust your television set – you may just be witnessing the future of fake news.

“Deepfake” videos that manipulate reality are becoming more sophisticated due to advances in artificial intelligence, creating the potential for new kinds of misinformation with devastating consequences.

As the technology advances, worries are growing about how deepfakes can be used for nefarious purposes by hackers or state actors.

Law professor Robert Chesney of the University of Texas, who has researched the topic, argues that deepfakes could add to the current turmoil over disinformation and influence operations.

“A well-timed and thoughtfully scripted deepfake or series of deepfakes could tip an election, spark violence in a city primed for civil unrest, bolster insurgent narratives about an enemy’s supposed atrocities, or exacerbate political divi-

sions in a society,” he and University of Maryland professor Danielle Citron said in a blog post for the Council on Foreign Relations.

Mr Paul Scharre, a senior fellow at the Centre for a New American Security, a think-tank specialising in artificial intelligence (AI) and security issues, said it was almost inevitable that deepfakes would be used in upcoming elections.

A fake video could be deployed to smear a candidate, he said, or to enable people to deny actual events captured on authentic video.

Video manipulation has been around for decades and can be innocuous or even entertaining, as in the digitally-aided appearance of Peter Cushing in 2016’s Rogue One: A Star Wars Story, 22 years after his death.

The popularisation of apps which make realistic fake videos threatens to undermine the notion of truth in news media, criminal trials and many other areas, researchers say.

“If we can put any words in anyone’s mouth, that is quite scary,” said Dr Siwei Lyu, a professor of computer science at the State Uni-



A journalist viewing a “deepfake” video. Such videos are becoming more realistic due to advances in artificial intelligence. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

versity of New York, in Albany, who is researching deepfake detection. “If we cannot really trust information to be authentic, it’s no better than to have no information at all.”

Representative Adam Schiff and two other US lawmakers recently

sent a letter to National Intelligence Director Dan Coats asking for information about what the government is doing to combat deepfakes. “Forged videos, images or audio could be used to target individuals for blackmail or for other nefari-

ous purposes,” they wrote. “Of greater concern for national security, they could also be used by foreign or domestic actors to spread disinformation.”

Researchers have been working on better detection methods for some time, with support from private firms such as Google and government entities like the Pentagon’s Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency, which began a media forensics initiative in 2015.

While deepfakes have been evolving for several years, the topic came into focus with the creation of a video last April that appeared to show former US president Barack Obama using a curse word to describe his successor Donald Trump – a coordinated stunt from filmmaker Jordan Peele and BuzzFeed.

Mr Scharre said an important way to deal with deepfakes is to increase public awareness and make people more sceptical of what used to be considered incontrovertible proof. “After a video has gone viral, it may be too late for the social harm it has caused,” he said. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

‘World’s happiest country’ faces job creation challenge

HELSINKI • Finland is ranked the world’s happiest country but its population is ageing faster than most.

That, in turn, is putting pressure on the government to get more people into jobs to help pay for those retiring.

The issue of fixing the country’s labour market is likely to dominate the agenda when Finns go to the polls on April 14 to elect a new government.

The new administration will need to raise the employment rate to 75 per cent of working-age Finns by 2023, and to 80 per cent after that, according to a civil servants’ report published yesterday that outlines the key challenges ahead.

The rate now is at 72 per cent, meeting a 2015 target set by Prime Minister Juha Sipilä, which at the time was deemed almost impossible.

That year, the mood was grim as just 68 per cent of working-age people had jobs while the country was clawing its way out of a three-year economic slump – its second since the financial crisis in 2008.

Now, with about 140,000 more people at work compared with when Mr Sipilä took office, about 150,000 more jobs are still needed to safeguard the country’s welfare model, the report said.

Nordea Bank chief economist Aki Kangasharju, in an interview, said: “The funding of our Nordic welfare model that makes us the happiest country in the world, with an incredibly high standard of living, relies on higher employment levels.”

What Finland needs is that “everyone who is able to work has a job”, he added.

Mr Sipilä on Sunday said keeping economic growth at about 2 per cent will generate a gradual increase in employment towards the target.

When Finland’s government is “able to raise the employment rate permanently above 75 per cent, that actually fully resolves the spending gap”, he said during an interview on YLE Radio Suomi.

The Finnish government has already pushed through several measures to boost employment, including cutting the cost of labour as well as the introduction of the so-called active model aimed at pushing unemployed job seekers back to work.

There has also been a lot of hiring after the global economic upswing. Yet that tailwind is about to stop blowing as growth eases in most major economies.

Mr Kangasharju said the remedy is more labour market reforms to increase the number of jobs available. Alternatively, “Finns should gird themselves for more belt-tightening.”

Said Mr Kangasharju: “If we don’t reach higher employment levels, we’ll face more austerity, with cuts on spending and public sector jobs, leading to smaller tax revenues and higher unemployment spending.” BLOOMBERG

THE STRAITS TIMES

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The Straits Times says

Preparing now for an ethical AI future

Davos, where the World Economic Forum brought together global industry and government leaders, was an appropriate venue for the release by Singapore of a framework on how artificial intelligence (AI) can be used ethically and responsibly. Businesses in the Republic and elsewhere can adopt the framework as they come to terms with issues that have emerged with new technology and the digital economy. As an official publication notes, AI has delivered many benefits, ranging from saving time to diagnosing “hitherto unknown medical conditions”. But it has also been accompanied by new concerns, such as personal privacy and “algorithmic biases”.

Singapore seeks to contribute to the global dis-

cussion of the ethics of AI by providing a framework that helps translate ethical principles into pragmatic measures that businesses can adopt. This formulation recognises that pragmatic measures could ameliorate ethical concerns over AI while enabling its beneficial use to business.

Organisations could uphold the connection between ethics and profit by ensuring that decisions which are taken by or with the assistance of AI are explainable, transparent and fair to consumers, and that their AI solutions are human-centric. Of course, these requirements apply to non-AI businesses.

But their importance is magnified in the digital

economy because AI could make its way into organisational decision-making to the extent that it could make critical choices that affect consumers and companies. Firms must prepare now for that day by focusing on internal governance structures and measures, risk management in autonomous decision-making, operations management, and customer relationship management.

The key feature of the transition to the new economy – and which is also fundamental to the existing one – lies in trust. Humans are inclined to tolerate inconveniences, such as queues at bank branches, so long as they believe that the machine which allocates the queue numbers is functioning properly. But if the human who is supervis-

ing the machine is taken away, as may happen in an AI-dominant environment, would trust be transferred to machines completely?

This rather simple example would be magnified in the area of medical care, for example, particularly when it could involve life-and-death situations. While no framework could cover the specific uses of algorithms in diverse industries at one go, it makes eminent sense to prescribe the ethical boundaries within which business needs to function.

Thinking machines could replicate human patterns of thought and behaviour. But algorithms cannot, and should not, be allowed to erase or supplant the moral basis of social action.

By Invitation

Singapore and the United Kingdom: 1819 to 2019

Time for a balanced and objective review of our 200-year journey together



Tommy Koh

For The Straits Times

On Jan 29, 1819, Stamford Raffles, accompanied by William Farquhar and a small entourage, arrived in Singapore. His objective was to establish a port and trading station for the East India Company. This is the beginning of the story of modern Singapore.

Our founding Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, held this view. Speaking to the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce on Feb 6, 1969, he said: “But for the wisdom and foresight of the Englishman with whose name the history of modern Singapore will always be associated, your Chamber, you and I, all of us would not be here today.”

Singapore’s founding fathers were famous for many things. One of them was their disdain for political correctness. They preferred the truth to fashion and never shied away from defying convention.

On Aug 8, 1969, a state banquet was held to celebrate both National Day and the 150th anniversary of the founding of modern Singapore. Princess Alexandra was among the invited guests, representing the British royal family.

Speaking at the banquet, Mr Lee said: “...we deem ourselves among the fortunate few who can afford to be proud of their past, with no desire to rewrite or touch up the truth. It is a short history, 150 years, but long enough for us to value our association with the British people.”

BICENTENNIAL BOOK

Singapore and the United Kingdom have a 200-year-old relationship. To commemorate the bicentennial, my friend Scott Wightman, the British High Commissioner, and I have co-edited a book, entitled 200 Years Of Singapore And The United Kingdom. It will be launched today by Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu.

The purpose of this book is to undertake a balanced and objective review of the past 200 years, to draw some lessons from history and to think about the future.

The book is not an attempt to

glorify British imperialism and colonialism or the British rule of Singapore.

I am not an admirer of Professor Niall Ferguson. He argued in his 2002 book, *Empire: The Rise And Demise Of The British World Order And The Lessons For Global Power*, that the British empire was the cradle of modernity.

In 2017, Indian politician and intellectual Shashi Tharoor published a book, *Inglorious Empire*, about the British rule of India. Dr Tharoor accuses the British of having destroyed India, economically, culturally and psychologically. I regard his book as a good counter to Prof Ferguson’s book.

It is also not the purpose of our book to deny that Singapore had a history before 1819.

We acknowledge that Singapore had been settled, not continuously, but intermittently, since the 14th century. We have therefore included essays by historian Kwa Chong Guan and archaeologist John Miksic on Singapore’s pre-1819 history.

In his speech on Feb 6, 1969, Mr Lee said: “When Stamford Raffles came here 150 years ago, there was no organised human society in Singapore, unless a fishing village can be called a society.”

TIME TO HONOUR FARQUHAR

Mr Wightman and I both feel that Raffles has been given too much credit and Farquhar, the first Resident, too little for his contributions to the success of Singapore. Raffles was the visionary; Farquhar was the pragmatist who turned the vision into reality.

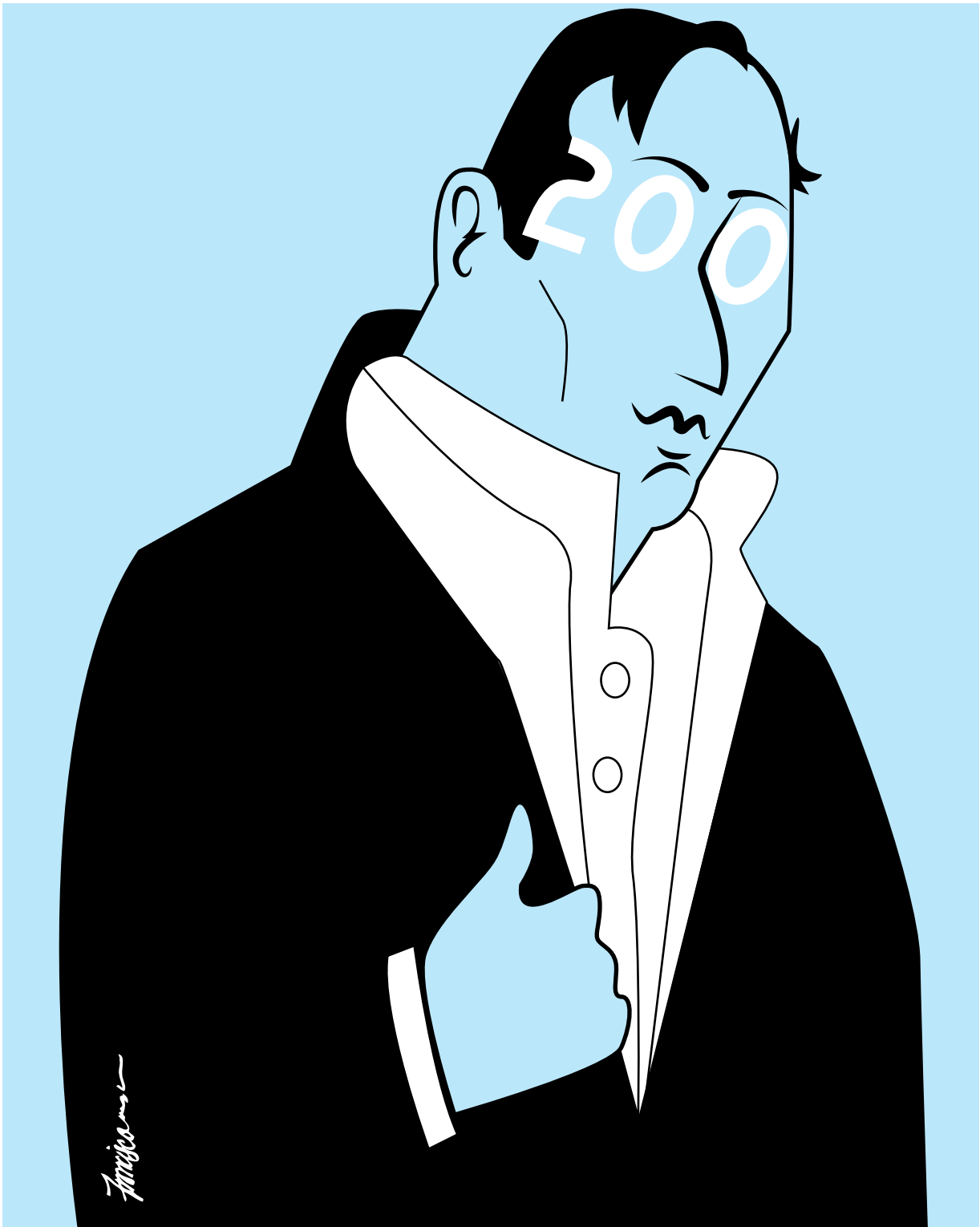
No one did more for the success of Singapore, in the first four years, than Farquhar. Mr Graham Berry has written an excellent essay to set the record straight. We hope that, in this bicentennial year, the Singapore Government will acknowledge our debt to Farquhar in an appropriate way.

MILESTONES OF A 200-YEAR JOURNEY

Two hundred years is a long time. We are able to select only a number of key milestones and requested some experts to write on them. For example, we have an essay by Associate Professor Peter Borschberg on the two treaties of 1824: the Anglo-Dutch Treaty and the Crawford Treaty. It was under the Crawford Treaty that the British obtained sovereignty to Singapore.

We have an essay by Mr Kennie Ting on Singapore’s port city heritage. He is an expert on port cities and is the author of a new book, *Singapore 1819: A Living Legacy*.

Associate Professor Farish Noor has written an important essay on migration and multiculturalism in



colonial Singapore. When Raffles founded Singapore, he appealed to Chinese, Indian, Arab, Jewish, Armenian and Western traders and entrepreneurs to come to Singapore. Many answered his appeal. Farquhar was able to use his reputation and network to persuade Malays, Bugis, Javanese, Acehnese, Boyanese and Minans to join the settlement.

Prof Farish concludes that due to the fact that the settlers came from so many parts of Asia, “they gave to the land that they would adopt as their home a multi-perspective worldview that would ensure that Singapore remain a hub in the globalised post-colonial world to come”.

Other milestones covered in our book include the Indian mutiny of 1815, World War II, the Japanese

Occupation, Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army, the rise of nationalism and anti-colonialism, and the political developments between 1945 and 1963, and from 1965 to the present.

On the topics of merger and separation, we decided not to request two Singaporeans to write on them as we are all familiar with the Singapore narrative. To add value, we decided to invite British historians A.J. Stockwell and Nicholas J. White to do so.

There is also a noteworthy essay by Mr J.Y. Pillay on the decision by the British government to withdraw from its military bases in Singapore by 1971. This was a big blow to the newly independent government, which was faced with high unemployment and the lack of job opportunities. It was estimated

at the time that the withdrawal would mean the loss of 10 per cent of our gross domestic product. Miraculously, Singapore survived this early setback. The story is worth telling.

THE BRITISH LEGACY

The biggest chapter of the book is on the British legacy in Singapore. We have many good essays on the English language, the rule of law, the free port, free trade, open economy, the civil service, health, education, welfare, town planning, low-cost housing, anti-corruption, business, sports, culture, the Commonwealth and so on.

The British left a rich legacy in Singapore. However, it is fair to say that, in many instances, the British had laid the foundation but it was the Government of Independent

Singapore that got the job done.

This is true in the fight against corruption, in town planning, in the building of low-cost housing, in diversifying the economy, in cleaning and greening the city, and so on.

Ms Irene Ng and Mr Alan Hunt have written about the transformation of the relationship between Singapore and Britain, from 1965 to 2019. Ms Foo Chi Hsia and Mr Wightman have written about the future of our relationship, post-2019.

A PERSONAL REFLECTION

I was born and grew up in colonial Singapore. Colonial society was both racist and hierarchical. The whites were first-class citizens. The Eurasians were second-class citizens. The rest of us were third-class citizens.

The British colonial administration in Singapore did not observe the democratic norms and freedoms that the British citizens enjoyed at home. Anyone deemed to be critical of or disloyal to the British could be banished to the land of his birth.

I personally experienced censorship, for the first time in my life, when I was a student at Raffles Institution (RI). I had submitted two articles to the school magazines, one against apartheid in South Africa and the other criticising the way in which our hawkers were being hounded by the police. The school submitted my essays to the Ministry of Education, which decided that they could not be published.

To be fair, I must also say that there were many good people from Britain who were working in Singapore, as doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects, teachers and so on. In RI, I had several expatriate teachers. I remember three of my teachers, Mr T.J. Evans, Mr J.T. Lippit and Mr W.T. Andrews, with respect and gratitude.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, I would say that the British rule of Singapore was 60 per cent good and 40 per cent bad. However, compared with the other colonial rulers in South-east Asia, the British were the least bad. They left us with a rich legacy. We were able to build on that legacy and to catch up with and even surpass Britain in some respects.

Over the past 200 years, the relationship between us has been transformed from that between the ruler and the ruled, between a rich country and a poor country, between a developed country and a developing country, into a relationship between two equals.

When Britain leaves the European Union on March 29, it will be in uncharted waters. I want to say to our British friends that they have our goodwill and support in their new journey.

I have a final thought. I think we should remember the hard work and sacrifice of generations of Singaporeans. It is the collective efforts of these people, over the past 200 years, which have produced the success story called Singapore.

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• Professor Tommy Koh, a veteran diplomat, is chairman of the Centre for International Law and rector of Tembusu College, both at the National University of Singapore.

Disturbing signals from Cameron Highlands vote

Joceline Tan

The Cameron Highlands by-election ought to have been a cautionary tale on what not to do in an election campaign.

The fact that it was held because of a corrupt act of money politics brought into sharp focus the need to play it by the rules.

Instead, there were simply too many incidents of rules being flouted and it was ironic that a number of these incidents involved the very party whose complaints of wrongdoing led to the by-election being called. (Pakatan Harapan, or PH, won a court decision last November that declared Barisan Nasional's (BN) 567 majority-vote victory in the general election unfair because of bribery.)

"This by-election could have set the tone on what a clean and fair election should be like. But it was a cautionary tale that seems to have been wasted on the political players," said political commentator Khaw Veon Szu.

BN's Ramli Mohd Nor, the first Orang Asli to enter Parliament, won with a majority that was five times more than the winning margin in the 2018 General Election.

But as Umno supreme council member, Datuk Seri Sharkar Shamsuddin, admitted, BN won on the strength of Malay and Orang Asli votes. PH candidate M. Manogaran's support came largely from the Chinese and Indians.

"The racial divide makes me worry for the future," said Mr Sharkar, who is also the assemblyman for Lanchang, Pahang.

It is evident that the majority of Chinese still refuse to support Umno while the Malays reject the Democratic Action Party (DAP) as anti-Malay and anti-Islam.

There are several conclusions to be drawn from the polls outcome.

The Orang Asli vote was very important but the glaring fact is that when Umno and Parti Islam SeMalaysia join forces, they can win without the help of the Chinese or Indians.

But PH, even with overwhelming Chinese and Indian support, cannot win without Malay votes.

There has clearly been a retreat in Malay support for PH. The anti-Icerd (International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination) rally was proof of that – and PH could be inching towards dangerous terrain unless it can regain the confidence of the Malays.

It was quite a shock to PH that despite the endless play-up of the Felda Global Ventures scandal, former prime minister Najib Razak is still popular among the Felda settlers in the Cameron Highlands area. The reason is that their lives were better under Najib than under the current government.

Another stunning outcome about the by-election was the thrashing that PH leaders had to endure from netizens, be it on Facebook or Twitter. It has to do with the fact that people judge you differently when you are in power and they expect more of you.

Moreover, this is the age of social media where everything and anyone is fair game, be it PH's attempt to use forestry department vehicles to campaign or celebrity chef Redzuawan Ismail's remark about wanting to slap Najib.

Insults that netizens used to hurl at BN are now being directed at PH leaders, and it has been hell for them to be at the receiving end.

At the same time, much of PH's troubles were a result of own goals. Mr Manogaran scored the first own goal at the start of the campaign with his racist remark that Malays do not even want to buy kuih from Orang Asli. Then he broke election laws by entering a polling area wearing a shirt with the PH logo.

After all that, he accused BN of playing the race card, causing a storm on the Internet. One netizen said: "Barisan played the race card, you played the stupid card."

In contrast, his opponent, Mr Ramli, could be the first BN candidate to have not said anything stupid during a campaign.

Actually, he did not say anything of significance at all but his credentials as a former police officer from the Semai tribe put him in a class of his own.

Even the once untouchable Lim Kit Siang was not spared, especially after he made what could be one of the greatest mistakes of his career when he offered to give full citizenship to the Orang Asli if they voted for PH. The DAP leader was also heckled by Malay diners when he and Mr Manogaran tried to lead a lion dance troupe into a restaurant. Mr Lim and Najib were the two leading and opposing figures throughout the campaign.

Mr Lim has been very successful at blackening Najib's image among the Chinese base, but nothing he said seemed to resonate with the Malay ground. He looked ancient, his speaking style is out of date and his command of Bahasa Malaysia is terrible.

DAP needs a younger and more contemporary face and voice to reconnect with the Malays and to connect with the millennials whom, as former Jelutong MP Jeff Ooi pointed out, will decide the next general election.

There is no denying that Najib, despite his IMDB (IMalaysia Development Berhad) troubles, played an important role in the BN campaign. He was the one the Orang Asli wanted to see. He has somehow mastered the art of social media and his Facebook posts can draw as many as 25,000 likes within hours, as well as thousands of comments. A video of him driving a jeep through the rushing waters of



Barisan Nasional's Ramli Mohd Nor won the Cameron Highlands by-election on the strength of Malay and Orang Asli votes, whereas his opponent's support came largely from the Chinese and Indians. PHOTO: THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Najib Razak's resurgence has to do with the fact that he is willing to be the opposition voice that Malays are looking for to articulate their discontent with the current government. His "Malu apa Bossku" (What's to be ashamed about, boss?) slogan has tapped the discontent of young Malays who feel marginalised.

a river got more than 53,000 views. He has four million followers on Twitter, 3.7 million on Facebook and 556,000 on Instagram.

But more than that, he has ignited some sort of Malay groundswell, especially after the way he took on PH leaders such as the Lim Kit Siang-Lim Guan Eng father-and-son team as well as Federal Territories Minister Khalid Samad during the campaign.

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The Cameron Highlands polls gave Najib the stage to project his new-found role as a leading opposition figure and it is possible he helped BN extend its Malay support beyond Cameron Highlands. But will he be able to bring his opposition voice to the next stop in the Semeniyh by-election in March? THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

How governments can achieve meaningful change in small steps

Cass R. Sunstein

Many social problems seem impossibly daunting, simply because they are so large. Poverty, immigration, cancer deaths, gun violence, climate change – in the light of the magnitude of those problems, most imaginable reforms seem pretty small.

In their book, *Switch: How To Change Things When Change Is Hard*, authors Chip Heath and Dan Heath argue that the best response to big challenges is often to "shrink the change".

Instead of trying to solve a problem, dent it. If you do that, you will accomplish some good, and help real people in the process. And you might spur much more, because success breeds more of the same.

In the midst of Britain's tumult and anxiety over Brexit, its Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) has enjoyed a lot of quiet successes, not least because it has been shrinking the change. BIT's latest annual report should be an inspiration to governments all over the world – and to citizens who are unsure whether public officials can get together and achieve anything. Consider a few examples:

- About half of the population of the United Kingdom will get cancer in their lifetime. For many people, survival depends on early diagnosis. Doctors are allowed to use an urgent cancer referral process, which can get patients to a specialist within two weeks. But a lot of doctors just do not take advantage of that process. To increase referrals, BIT, a global public-service company connected with the UK government, sent personalised letters to doctors whose referral rates were below the UK average. The letters simply informed them of that fact. The result? A significant increase in referrals by those doctors. That means an improvement in survival rates – and also major economic savings, because earlier cancer treatment is a lot cheaper.
- Childhood obesity is now a problem in many nations. In Britain, about 20 per cent of children are overweight or obese by the age of 11. There's no magic bullet for the problem, but some steps, such as restrictions on the promotion of unhealthy food, are likely to help. BIT has helped to develop a childhood obesity plan that relies on proven strategies. The UK's sugar tax is designed to promote reformulation of products. Even before the tax went into effect last year, popular brands cut the sugar content of soft drinks by 11 per cent – removing 10,000 tonnes of sugar from the market.
- Many consumers stick with their current energy provider even though they could save money if they switched. BIT worked with the UK energy regulator to send personalised messages to 150,000 customers, telling them how much they could save by switching, and informing them about the best available alternatives. Within just 30 days, the letters tripled switching rates.
- In the UK, as elsewhere, cyber attacks are a serious threat. They often begin with phishing attacks, in the form of seemingly real e-mails designed to elicit responses that expose computer systems to attacks. Working with the Metropolitan Police Service, BIT designed several forms of preventative training, including simple rules of thumb for how to avoid phishing attacks. BIT followed up by sending mock phishing attacks to the officers who had been trained – and compared their responses with those of officers who had not been trained. The training worked. It dramatically reduced the number of officers who clicked on the link and submitted relevant information.

Originally limited to the UK, BIT is now operating in 31 nations. In Moldova, it identified a way to encourage tuberculosis patients to take their daily medication – and succeeded in nearly doubling adherence rates.

In Indonesia, it worked to increase tax compliance – and with one small communication, informing taxpayers that early filing avoids potential problems, it succeeded in bringing in the equivalent of nearly US\$2 million (\$S2.7 million).

In Australia, BIT helped simplify the form that teachers must use to obtain placements in rural areas, where they are badly needed. The simplified forms, along with timely prompts, tripled the number of teachers who applied for rural placements.

BIT is making progress on other problems as well, including air quality, road safety, domestic violence, voter turnout and sex equality in hiring.

In many of these cases, it is working to reduce "sludge" – administrative burdens that make it hard for people to achieve their goals. In other cases, it is working to get people's attention (for example, through simple reminders), with an understanding that all of us have limited mental bandwidth.

If the goal is to promote health and safety, getting people's attention may be half the battle. When it comes to government, citizens find it natural to focus on the most dramatic questions – indictments, investigations, shutdowns, Brexit, border walls.

Amid the tumult, the release of BIT's report demonstrates that creative people in the public sector are working hard, every day, to improve people's lives, sometimes by denting the most daunting problems. BIT's secret? It shrinks the change. BLOOMBERG

• Cass R. Sunstein is the author of *The Cost-Benefit Revolution* and a co-author of *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth And Happiness*.

Instead of trying to solve a problem, dent it. If you do that, you will accomplish some good, and help real people in the process. And you might spur much more, because success breeds more of the same.

Flying-car future looks like a dystopia

David Fickling

Flying cars! So futuristic! A world in which they are buzzing around the skies must be dazzling – like a Popular Mechanics feature come to life! Well, yeah.

It seems increasingly likely that aerospace companies and start-ups are rushing to embrace a world of vertical take-off robo-taxis. Just don't be surprised if it looks a lot more like Blade Runner than The Jetsons.

A Boeing prototype flying taxi completed its first test flight last Tuesday and Airbus' drone-style self-driving air taxi will follow within weeks – both of them trailing in the wake of Alphabet founder Larry Page, whose Kitty Hawk vehicle took its maiden flight in New Zealand last year.

Even Japan, whose attachment to vintage technology like fax machines and cassette tapes is

legendary, is getting in on the act, according to Bloomberg Businessweek.

It is quite possible that these vehicles have a viable future because they are already a mature industry.

In current parlance, "flying car" essentially means an aircraft that could take off and land vertically from a suburban backyard. But we have a name for those sorts of vehicles already: helicopters.

Of course, start talking about helicopters and you end up with a whole bunch of unsavoury associations: Brazilian billionaires soaring over chaotic mega cities, a young Donald Trump flitting around 1980s Manhattan, Robert Duvall dropping napalm to the sound of Wagner in Apocalypse Now.

The truth is, they are not so different.

The reason helicopters are associated with the military and the ultra-rich while the rest of us get about on the ground or in fixed-wing airplanes is that they are horribly inefficient and, as a result, expensive.

In a conventional plane, lift is provided by the wings, so fuel is really needed only to drive the vehicle forward. (In one 2001 incident, pilots steered an A330 for about 144km over the Atlantic without power.)

Rotorcraft such as helicopters and drones, in contrast, use most of their fuel just staying airborne, and will start descending as soon as the engine cuts out.

Hybrid modes like the Boeing and Kitty Hawk air taxis and military vertical take-off vehicles like the Harrier and V-22 Osprey have wings for cruising flight, but still use prodigious amounts of energy to get airborne.

On top of that, there's the size factor. The most efficient aircraft per passenger, per kilometre are mostly mid-sized short-range jets like the Airbus A320 and Boeing 737 and turboprop-powered regional airliners like the Bombardier Dash-8.

Larger aircraft do their long range part because of their worse, larger and extra engines. Small planes carrying just a few passengers are equally bad.

The new breed of flying cars offers some additional cutting-edge features, of course, like automated pilots and (in theory) the possibility of taking off and landing anywhere. Given the shaky safety record of autonomous cars and that two of the world's busiest airports have been shut down by drones in recent weeks, you shouldn't put too much store in that.

Commercial jets can already fly themselves in most circumstances, including landings. The reason pilots still exist is that passengers

and people living under flight paths naturally expect aircraft to have a near-perfect safety record. That in turn requires on-board fail-safes and tight monitoring of urban airspace.

The challenges of traversing the world's emerging metropolises without getting stuck in an endless traffic jam are substantial and likely to get more so in the coming decades. It is no surprise that Boeing, Airbus and Mr Page see a substantial market for flying cars among the world's emerging billionaire class.

Still, it requires a grim vision of the future for that bet to pay off: a world in which mega cities are gridlocked by decades of under-investment in infrastructure, while a growing class of ultra-rich can spend lavishly to float above such constraints.

It's ironic, then, that Japan of all places should be so excited by this technology. Tokyo is the exemplar of a radically different approach to urban transport: A metropolis of nearly 40 million people that nonetheless suffers minimal congestion, thanks to decades of spending on public transport.

Flying cars may have their share of whizz-bang charm for those who can afford them. For the rest of us, stuck on a sweaty train in the middle of an endless commute, more down-to-earth solutions look a lot more attractive. BLOOMBERG

Another tech bubble may be about to burst

Silicon Valley is set for a reality check, with too much money chasing too little value

Rana Foroohar

There were many disconnects between last week's World Economic Forum and the real world.

One of the most notable was the techno-optimism displayed by many participants, which was in sharp contrast to what the markets themselves are expecting from the technology sector this year.

The coming spate of initial public offerings (IPOs) in particular looks shaky. Uber chief executive Dara Khosrowshahi was all over Davos, talking up the company's forthcoming IPO. But the talk had a whiff of desperation.

Uber, Lyft and a host of other large, still-private tech companies, such as Slack and Airbnb, are likely to try to go public sooner rather than later – not only because of worries about a coming recession and volatile markets, but because they have grown so fat on private funding, it is unclear whether the market will be able to sustain their valuations. Uber's, for example, is pegged at US\$100 billion (\$135 billion). They want to get their money while the getting is good.

It is a situation that is both similar, and not, to the dot.com boom and bust that occurred at the turn of the century. Back then, I was working in venture capital in London. Companies like the now-defunct, LVMH-backed online retailer boo.com – the pets.com of Europe – were spending millions on glossy advertisements, and would-be entrepreneurs were trolling for easy money at First Tuesday networking events. Remember those little red-for-investor or green-for-talent label dots everyone had to wear?

Then, as now, we were at the late stages of a credit cycle, with too much money chasing too little value. And then, like now, investors were counting on a spate of hot IPOs to pour a little more kerosene on markets that were clearly over-inflated. We all know how that ended, on both sides of the Atlantic.

That is not to say that there wasn't value created then, as there has been now. For every unsuccessful dog food retailer or expensive T-shirt purveyor that went out of business in the dot.com bust, there were miles of broadband cable laid, which created the infrastructure that companies such as Google now capitalise on.

Today, the sharing economy has markets and conveniences where before there were none. The real difference between the two eras is in the capital markets themselves. Venture money collapsed post-2000, came back up, fell again after the financial crisis, then rebounded to record levels after 2014. The number of new start-ups has proliferated. Yet the number of IPOs has fallen.

This is due to a paradox – while

technology has made starting a company cheaper, becoming a success is now more expensive. That is because of an arms race to build the next "unicorn" start-up, one with a market capitalisation of over US\$1 billion.

As University of California academics Martin Kenney and John Zysman put it in a forthcoming paper on the shifts in start-up funding, entitled Unicorns, Cheshire Cats, And The New Dilemmas Of Entrepreneurial Finance, "start-ups are each trying to ignite the winner-take-all dynamics through rapid expansion characterised by breakneck and almost invariably money-losing growth, often with no discernible path to profitability".

Over the past five or so years, there has been a massive growth in the number of venture capital-backed unicorns. Firms such as Uber, Lyft, Spotify and Dropbox can lose money hand over fist, and yet still continue to grow in valuation. Indeed, it is all part of the new business dynamic. Low barriers to entry result in many competitors and a race to spend as much as possible to grab market share.

Not only do the private companies that emerge from this unproductive cycle become bloated, so too do the venture funds themselves. Billion-dollar venture funds, once unheard of, are now commonplace. Last year, Sequoia raised a US\$8 billion seed fund, and SoftBank, a whopping US\$100 billion fund.

Big, of course, begets big. As more and more heavyweight venture capitalists (VCs) bid up the value of start-ups, others have to follow. It's up or out. The result has been not only a new bubble in IPO markets, but the undercutting of a host of public companies that actually have to worry about profits. The classic examples would be Uber's disruption of the taxi industry, or Airbnb's of hotels.

This may be good for some of the VCs who can use the inflated values of unicorns on their books to raise more money and charge more management fees. But I can't see how it is good for economic value overall. Massive debt financing of unprofitable firms to create monopolies might benefit some entrepreneurs and investors, but it distorts capital and labour markets and is anti-competitive.

As long as investors are willing to accept growth as a metric for value, the music can keep playing. But as the University of California academics note, "unicorns are mythical beasts". This year, their financial reality, as well as the sustainability of the current funding model, will be subject to some much-needed testing.

Some of the new crop of hyped-up companies may eventually turn into Cheshire cats, disappearing and leaving behind only the grins of those who got out before the bubble burst. FINANCIAL TIMES



Britain will lose a substantial piece of its dominant finance industry with Brexit. Years of finance-centric development have left the UK with a geographically unbalanced economy, with London thriving while other regions flag, says the writer, and that research at universities outside of the capital city will help reverse this. PHOTO: REUTERS

British economy needs a reboot whatever the Brexit outcome

Noah Smith

"I'm really enjoying the season finale of the UK," quipped Irish software engineer Damian Sullivan on Twitter. His joke may not be far off the mark.

Brexit negotiations are looking more and more like the type of destructive brinkmanship that the United States has seen in recent years. But the stakes are much higher in the United Kingdom – rather than just shutting down parts of the government, a failure to reach a Brexit deal would result in huge economic and legal chaos. That in turn could prompt Scotland to leave the UK, meaning that Brexit would indeed be the union's final episode.

Meanwhile, Brexit basically assures that Britain will lose a substantial piece of its dominant industry – finance, a good portion of which is scrambling to relocate to cities on the continent such as Frankfurt: In the long run, this will probably be a good thing for Britain, as the country has become too dependent on finance.

But it's bound to cause economic disruption. The UK is very dependent on exports, which represent almost a third of the country's gross domestic product (GDP): Compare this with Japan, which is famous for its exporting prowess, but which exports less than half of that much of its GDP.

It is clear that once Brexit happens, the UK will need to sell the world something besides financial services. The highest-value alternatives are software, clean energy, high-tech manufacturing, biotech and the like. These industries will probably develop naturally to some extent, but the urgency of Brexit means that the British government should think about giving them a push. In

other words, Britain needs to embrace what it has long disclaimed – industrial policy.

Fortunately, this is actually in the works. The government of Mrs Theresa May, for all its faults, has been very active in promoting such a programme. In late 2017, Mrs May released a lengthy document that describes a number of bold initiatives for resuscitating Britain's industrial prowess. The ideas are, for the most part, good ones.

In addition to spending on infrastructure and education, one central initiative would be increased research spending. The UK now spends much less of its economic output on research than its peers: Mrs May's plan would increase this to 2.4 per cent of GDP by 2027, which would still leave Britain on the low end, but not so

egregiously behind.

In addition to tax credits, loans for innovative business activities and infrastructure improvements, the government plans to directly subsidise research with an Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund of £725 million (\$1.3 billion). That fund would invest in a number of technology areas the government deems promising or important, such as next-generation batteries, precision medicine and many others.

Importantly, the government plans to work with universities to do much of this innovation. University-private partnerships have proven highly effective in the US, establishing a pipeline from government funding to academic labs to corporate commercialisation and start-ups. Universities also tend to give lagging regional economies a boost, by concentrating human capital in an area and drawing in private investment.

Years of finance-centric development have left the UK with a geographically unbalanced economy, with London thriving while other regions flag; research at universities outside of the capital city will help reverse this trend. This approach is the culmination of many years of effort by thought leaders in the UK to persuade the government to embrace a research-oriented industrial policy.

Prominent among those thought leaders was Professor Mariana Mazzucato, an Italian-born American economist now working as a professor at University College London. In her landmark book *The Entrepreneurial State: Debunking Public Vs Private Sector Myths*, Prof Mazzucato highlighted the key role that government-supported research played in the creation of key technologies such as the Internet, which later created enormous private wealth.

It is clear that once Brexit happens, the UK will need to sell the world something besides financial services. The highest-value alternatives are software, clean energy, high-tech manufacturing, biotech and the like. These industries will probably develop naturally to some extent, but the urgency of Brexit means that the British government should think about giving them a push. In other words, Britain needs to embrace what it has long disclaimed – industrial policy.

The case for digital identification

Anu Madgavkar and Olivia White

Worldwide, more than four billion people are connected to the Internet, spending an average of roughly six hours per day on Internet-enabled devices and services.

In Thailand and the Philippines, average daily usage is 9.5 hours; in the United States, 26 per cent of the population is online "almost constantly"; and one billion more people in the world are projected to join the ranks of Internet users by 2022. Yet as we embrace the digital world, the complexity of navigating it securely, efficiently, and in a personalised manner becomes more acute.

One promising solution is already being deployed in some countries: digital identification.

The case for "digital IDs" – the electronic equivalent of physical identification – is strong. For starters, most Internet users are unable to keep track of their digital footprint and find it inconvenient to register, authenticate and manage online accounts.

On average, 90 online accounts are linked to every e-mail address, and this total doubles every five years. It is no wonder, then, that about a third of all calls to banks' call centres are requests to reset misplaced or forgotten passwords.

Carefully designed digital IDs can also help defend against data breaches targeting retailers, a growing concern for many consumers.

In just the last two months, for example, security breaches were reported by Marriott and Quora, exposing the personal information of hundreds of millions of customers. As the scope and sophistication of hacks increase, the

need for better security is obvious.

But perhaps the most compelling argument supporting digital IDs is the most basic: people in developing countries need them to prove who they are.

According to the World Bank's ID4D initiative, nearly one billion people lack any legal identification, making it difficult or impossible to vote, bank, access subsidised food, or buy property. Of the 1.7 billion adults who are currently unbanked, 20 to 30 per cent cite their lack of documentation as a primary reason.

Recognising the problem – and the potential – dozens of countries are implementing digital IDs in some form. India's Aadhaar programme, for example, is a biometric "proof of identity" that covers more than 1.2 billion residents and is used to coordinate distribution of government benefits.

In Estonia, 98 per cent of the population have an electronic ID,

and 99 per cent of public services – including voting – can be accessed online.

The topic is also appearing more frequently on human development agendas. In Africa, governments, development agencies and business leaders gather annually for the ID4Africa forum, which promotes "robust and responsible ID ecosystems".

The private sector – led by the financial services and technology industries – is taking steps to develop digital ID systems.

For example, since 2003, a consortium of banks in Sweden has used BankID to authenticate digital transactions, and the system has since been adopted by the government to streamline access to public services and health records.

Yet, the reality is that digital ID programmes have had mixed success to date. While a few have achieved large-scale implementation, many have failed to attain even modest levels of usage.

Most of the world's digital IDs are limited in scope, and digital ID could play a much more expansive role in the way individuals and

institutions interact with one another.

Digital ID systems that succeed in driving high adoption could create significant economic value for individuals, businesses and government institutions. As we document in a new report, digital IDs have the potential to reduce fraud rates, cut customer onboarding costs, boost financial inclusion, and deepen savings and credit for under-banked customers.

They can also spur development by enabling digital talent matching and streamlined employee verification, resulting in higher participation in the labour market. Digital IDs could even establish a means to control data and digital footprints in interconnected online ecosystems.

Overall, we estimate that high adoption of digital ID could help produce economic value equivalent to 3 per cent of gross domestic product in a typical advanced economy and as much as 6 per cent in a typical emerging economy.

Digital ID technologies are, however, akin to dual-use technologies that can be used both

to the benefit of society and for undesirable purposes. Poorly planned digital ID systems do carry risks. Without proper design principles and controls, a digital ID system can put enormous power into administrators' hands, enabling unfair discrimination or other inequities.

To mitigate these risks, countries will need to develop tough data protection and privacy laws, as well as robust enforcement and security measures. Advances in registration and authentication technologies – such as electronic cards, cryptography and biometrics – will help, but strong policies will also be essential.

Still, while the challenges are real, our research shows that the economic, social and political benefits are simply too great to ignore. If governments and developers are aware of the risks and act to minimise them, digital ID could become a key to inclusive growth. PROJECT SYNDICATE

• Anu Madgavkar is a McKinsey Global Institute partner in India. Olivia White is a partner in McKinsey & Company's San Francisco office.

BIG PICTURE



WEATHER

Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.
High 31 deg C **Low** 24 deg C
24-hr PSI as of 5pm yesterday: 44 to 55 (Moderate)



PHOTO: REUTERS

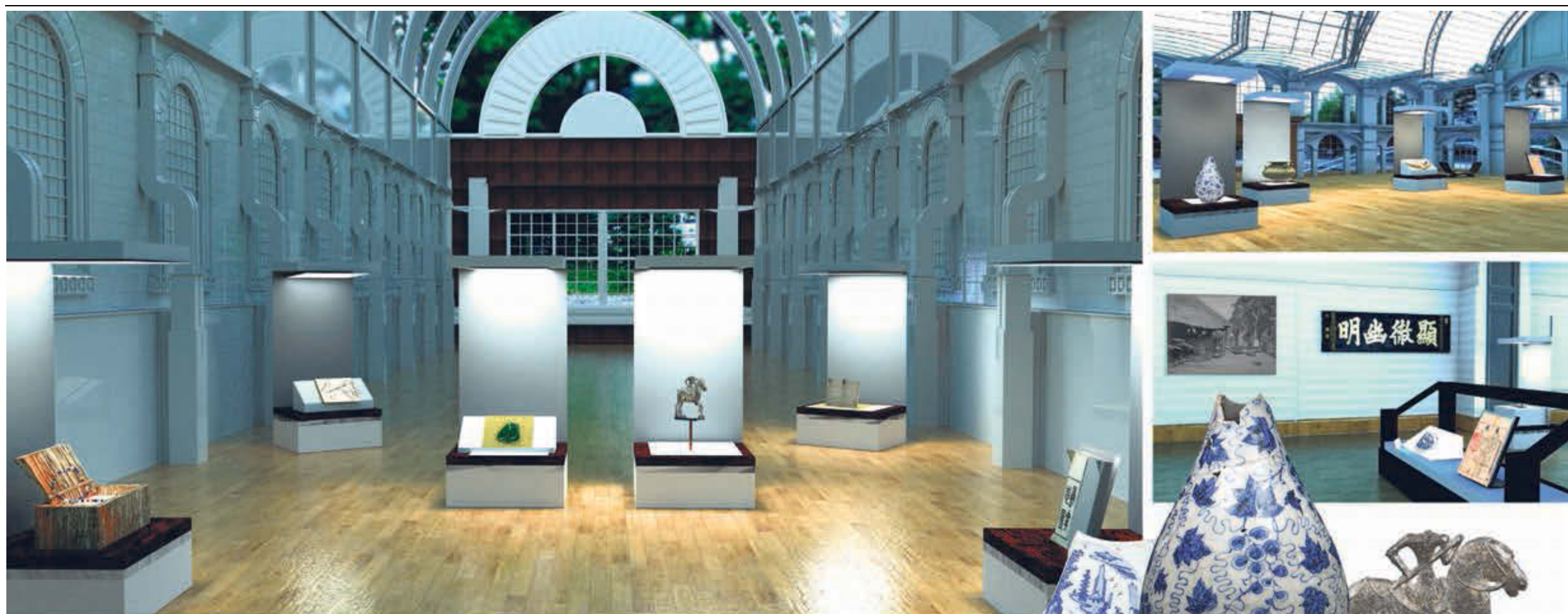
Human hot pot

Guests at a hotel in Hangzhou, in China's Zhejiang province, enjoyed barbecued skewers of meat as they took a dip in a hotpot-shaped hot spring on Sunday.

The hotel modelled the hot spring after a *jiu-gongge*, or three-by-three grid, hotpot, filling each space with a different fruit or vegetable,

including tomatoes, corn, apples and lettuce.

The idea behind the hot spring was to promote a healthy lifestyle in the run-up to the Chinese New Year, which will be celebrated next week. The hotel welcomed the Year of the Pig by inviting guests who were born under that sign to try out the hot spring for free.



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B| HOME



This exhibition features historical key incidents of unrest, rumours and propaganda as well as recent cases of fake news and cyber threats. We hope our visitors can understand the consequential impact better.

BRIGADIER-GENERAL (RET) LOWRENCE CHUA, executive director of Singapore Discovery Centre. **B5**

More support for kids with special needs

Govt to spend \$60m a year to subsidise families in early intervention programmes, fund two new schemes

BEST CHANCE AT PROGRESS

We believe that with good early intervention, targeted early intervention and affordable early intervention, these children stand the best chance to improve their developmental progress.



MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT DESMOND LEE, after a visit to the Awwa Early Intervention Centre in Hougang yesterday.

ShabanaBegum

Families of children with developmental needs will have better access to early intervention programmes from April 1, with new subsidies that will cut the cost of government programmes for most families – some by more than half – as well as a broadening of income criteria to allow more to get help.

Two new programmes will be added to better meet children's needs as they change over time. One of them, for children under two, will involve a parent or caregiver's attendance. The other lets children who have made progress attend a mainstream pre-school while receiving enhanced support from EI professionals.

To cover the subsidies and fund the two new programmes, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) announced yesterday it will channel \$60 million a year – 30 per cent more than \$45 million



Children enjoying an activity in the Wet Play Area at the Awwa Early Intervention Centre yesterday. When the subsidies are revised, early intervention fees will range from \$5 to \$430 per month, down from \$5 to \$780 per month currently. ST PHOTOS: ARIFFIN JAMAR

currently – into early intervention.

The enhanced interventions are expected to benefit at least 4,500 children and their families.

“We believe that with good early intervention, targeted early intervention and affordable early intervention, these children stand the best chance to improve their developmental progress,” said Minister for Social and Family Development Desmond Lee after a visit to the Awwa Early Intervention Centre in Hougang yesterday.

INVOLVING PARENTS continued on B2



Minister for Social and Family Development Desmond Lee interacting yesterday with Haziq Aryan, who is with his mother, Ms Nurhuda Ismail, at the Awwa Early Intervention Centre.



A Smarter Way to Procure Security Services: Adopt Outcome-Based Contracting

In November 2017, the Government accepted the Security Tripartite Cluster's recommendations to enhance the Progressive Wage Model (PWM) and to remove Overtime Exemption (OTE) for the security industry. These changes will help uplift the sector and improve the working conditions of our workers.

Progressive Wage Model for the Security Industry

	From 1 January 2019 onwards, the PWM Basic Wage Level will be increased:		
	Senior SS	\$1,760	\$1,820
	Security Supervisor (SS)	\$1,560	\$1,620
	Senior SO	\$1,360	\$1,420
	Security Officer (SO)	\$1,175	\$1,250

All wage points refer to basic starting salary.

From 1 Jan 2019 From 1 Jan 2020 From 1 Jan 2021*

* From 1 Jan 2021, OTE will be removed. Security agencies will not be allowed to deploy officers to work more than the statutory limit of 72 overtime hours a month.

To read the STC report (23 Nov 2017), scan or visit: www.ntuc.org.sg/SecurityTripartiteCluster



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WHAT TO CONSIDER IN OUTCOME-BASED CONTRACT (OBC) REQUIREMENTS

- Conduct security risk assessment to develop a protection plan to mitigate potential security risks
- Allow longer lead time for security agencies to submit proposals that incorporate technology solutions
- Specify security outcomes and performance standards instead of headcount in tender specifications
- Provide longer contract duration to lower amortised cost of technology solutions
- Adopt Price-Quality Method where quality attributes has heavier weightage compared to price

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OBC



MHA's Guide to Outcome-Based Security Contracts. Scan or visit: <http://bit.ly/MHA-Guide>

Outcome-Based Contract Workshop by Temasek Polytechnic - Security Industry Institute. For details, visit: <http://bit.ly/Outcome-Based-Contract-Workshop>

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An ntuc Initiative

Getting parents involved in babies' therapy

FROM B1

"These children and their families need all the support that we can provide. We are going to reduce the cost of early intervention by increasing subsidies. On average, parents will see a reduction of on average of 30 to 70 per cent in fees."

Following the revised subsidies, EI fees will range from \$5 to \$430 per month, down from \$5 to \$780 per month currently.

Children under six with moderate to severe developmental needs – physical, sensory, and cognitive conditions as well as learning needs – now receive the same model of care under the Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (Eipic) at Eipic centres.

The new Eipic Under-2s programme, to be rolled out from July at 13 centres, recognises that toddlers have different needs. A parent or caregiver must accompany the child, and will receive training in identifying and responding to the child's needs at home. Therapists and EI specialists will also make home visits at least once a month.

"This programme is also about caregiver support and counselling. The therapists will support the parents by helping them accept their child's condition, and at the end of the day, help them help their child," said MSF.

Before the Under-2s programme was announced, only a few Eipic centres such as Awwa required parents to be involved in intervention for children under two.

One of them, Mr Zulfadhli Abdul Rahman, 33, said he has seen vast improvements in his 23-month old son, who has Down syndrome, as a result. "The changes we see in Haziq are very drastic when we apply what we learnt at the programme," said the civil servant. "We need to keep practising what the therapists teach us at home."

Under the new Development Support Plus (DS-Plus) programme, children with mild to moderate developmental needs will get to go to a mainstream pre-school, while receiving support at the school. Currently, they stay at an Eipic centre until they move on to primary or special education schools.

Ms Tan Peng Chian, deputy director of Children and Youth Disability at Awwa, said the DS-Plus programme will challenge children to develop their potential in a mainstream preschool setting.

MSF said a pilot programme involving 700 children from the Thye Hua Kwan Ang Mo Kio, AWWA Hougang and SPD Jurong East's EI centres showed that those in the DS-Plus programme had the same or better outcomes than a comparison group of children.

The Eipic Under-2s and DS-Plus programmes will be rolled out in phases, with the EI centres in Awwa, SPD, Thye Hua Kwan and Rainbow Centre providing these services in July this year. The Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore will implement the new programmes in the fourth quarter of this year, while the rest of the EI centres will roll them out by 2021.

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BIG IMPROVEMENT

The changes we see in Haziq are very drastic when we apply what we learnt at the programme... We need to keep practising what the therapists teach us at home.



MR ZULFADHLI ABDUL RAHMAN, 33, a civil servant, on seeing vast improvements in his 23-month old son, who has Down syndrome.

Singapore Perspectives 2019 conference

US-China trade talks likely to succeed, says George Yeo

Beijing knows time is on its side, but rivalry with Washington will go on: Former minister

Rachel Au-Yong
Political Correspondent

Talks to resolve a bitter trade war between the United States and China are likely to succeed, because China "will go 80 per cent to meet US demands", former foreign minister George Yeo said yesterday.

"It's not because they are afraid or generous, but because they know time is on their side," he told 1,200 participants at the Singapore Perspectives 2019 conference organised by the Institute of Policy Studies. "They know in every field they are advancing slowly, feeling their own strength."

Regardless, the rivalry between the two nations will continue until "the US is convinced that China's nature is different from that of the US, and that of the Soviet Union".

Meanwhile, China must assure the world that its "statecraft is principally defensive", Mr Yeo said.

Turning to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade pact, he noted that the US had supported the deal, "but as an anti-China coalition", which he regarded as a mistake.

US President Donald Trump later pulled out of the TPP, and the remaining 11 nations have since negotiated a new deal – the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Countries such as Singapore and Japan should persuade China to join the TPP, Mr Yeo said, but prolong the negotiations so as to prompt the US to take part. "If there's a TPP including China, it would be a problem for the US," he said. "But we must do this artfully, coordinate the negotiations so they join at the same time. Whatever China is prepared to give to the US, give it to the TPP."

Mr Yeo was speaking at a panel chaired by Ambassador-at-large Tommy Koh about Singapore's place in the world, which focused on the US-China relationship, and whether war between both powers is inevitable, among other things.

War would be madness, said Mr Yeo, who is chairman of Kerry Logistics Network.

"Every Chinese leader reads and re-reads Sun Tzu's Art Of War (because) you have to understand war and be prepared for war. But you're a fool to go into war lightly because once war begins, it will exhaust you and lead to consequences you cannot foresee."

Professor Koh asked if the rise of China has instilled fear in the US, just as the rise of Athens did in Sparta, resulting in the Peloponnesian War of 431BC.

Panellist and historian Wang Gungwu said it was hard to see how the US feels threatened, given the fact that it is located so far away

from other nations as to not have any real enemies.

One interpretation for the Trump administration's recent reactions, he said, is that its members see themselves as "masters of the world, responsible for world peace and prosperity... Anyone who disturbs it must be put down".

During the session, Prof Koh also challenged Mr Yeo's "benign view" of China, given that it has invaded countries such as Korea and Vietnam. In his prepared remarks, Mr Yeo had said "it is not in China's nature to be a missionary or colonising power".

Replying, Mr Yeo said: "You have to distinguish between those who are sometimes Chinese from those who are further. Ask yourself: Why does every Chinese dynasty seek to extend its borders but stops so its population remains homogeneous?"

He added: "The Chinese find it inconvenient to incorporate non-Han (Chinese)."

Prof Koh responded that the Uighurs and Tibetans are not Han Chinese, but China has "incorporated these into its sovereignty".

Mr Yeo paused, before replying with a slight smile: "I'm not here to defend the Chinese position."

Another area of discussion was whether China had any soft power – such as economic or cultural influence – and how it would wield it to exert its position.

Prof Wang said China does not possess soft power as the Americans understand it, such as popular

entertainment. But China would probably define soft power as anything that does not require military or political might, he added, citing peaceful commercial relationships as one example.

Mr Yeo said the consummate Chinese leader would achieve his objective without having to engage in war. "When you face China, they are very slow to threaten directly. They will use rhetoric, they'll know all the acupuncture points... They'll prescribe bitter herbs, look at you again, then they adjust the treatment. They will try to avoid surgery at all costs," he said.

"You call that soft power or hard power? That's Chinese power."

Both panellists emphasised the importance of Chinese history in understanding China today, with Prof Wang providing a succinct summary on the development of Chinese power over several millennia in his opening remarks.

Mr Yeo also urged Singaporeans to immerse themselves in Chinese history to develop deep knowledge of the country. He cited how founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, knowing the US would matter most to Singapore, spent one term at Harvard University in 1968, where he got to know influential Americans such as diplomat Henry Kissinger.

"The more we understand China, the more useful we are, not only to China, but to Asean and the US," he said, adding that China also has to learn to adapt to other countries.

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(From left) Former foreign minister George Yeo, Ambassador-at-large Tommy Koh and historian Wang Gungwu at a panel discussion at the Singapore Perspectives 2019 conference yesterday. They talked about Singapore's place in the world, focusing on the United States-China relationship and whether war between both powers is inevitable, among other things. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

Asean helps manage tensions in region, say panellists

Arlina Arshad
Regional Correspondent

Asean is a useful tool in managing tensions in the region and must remain central to Singapore's foreign policy.

Panellists at the conference, Singapore Perspectives, organised by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) yesterday underlined the importance of the 10-member regional bloc. "Asean is a vital and irreplaceable means of managing the tensions... and there is no substitute,"

retired Singapore diplomat Bilahari Kausikan said.

He acknowledged, however, that it is "one tool of many" and has limitations and hence, "not the panacea for all the ills in the world" as well as those in Singapore and the region.

Former foreign minister George Yeo said large communities from various Asean countries reside in Singapore, making the Republic the "most Aseanised country" among its members.

"A strong Asean gives us more room to manoeuvre" even as bigger nations engage in rivalry, he said.

He highlighted the importance of Indonesia taking the lead.

"Without Indonesia, it's very hard for Asean to coalesce a common position. In my years as a trade and foreign minister, I always made it a point of principle to align Singapore's interests with those of Indonesia's," he said.

"I hope in the coming years, we will spend much more time developing our relationship with Indonesia."

Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said Asean, as well as the European Union, are two of the most

successful regional organisations in the world but had "different starting bases".

The EU's 28 member states have a lot in common in terms of civilisations, cultures and approach to law as well as trade, a commonality achieved after centuries of wars and conflicts.

Asean members, on the other hand, "recognise they are very different" with various ruling systems from absolute monarchies to military arrangements to varieties of democracies, yet the five founding member states have had "strong leaders who realised it was better to hang together than to hang separately", he said.

"Because of diversity, founders of Asean created this principle that everything will have to be decided by consensus," which has contributed to peace, prosperity and development, among other things, for more than 50 years.

"If you look at the numbers, we are poised for growth. We in the next 20 years we'll be number four in the world after China, US, EU," Dr Balakrishnan said.

Former Indonesian foreign minister Marty Natalegawa urged Asean countries not to be passive in policy response and display a "can-do spirit" and develop instruments to deal not only with the US and China, but other bilateral episodes including those between the US and Russia and China and Japan, and India and China.

Dr Natalegawa praised Singapore's "tremendous leadership" as chairman of the bloc last year.

He said: "All in all, it is a challenging environment, but Asean has in the past, whenever doubt had been suggested of its continued relevance, managed to reinvent itself and prove its relevance."

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Singapore Perspectives 2019 conference

S'pore's success and unity key to its foreign policy: Vivian

Before country can navigate 'dangerous new world', it has to get domestic conditions right

Rachel Au-Yong
Political Correspondent

If Singapore is not successful or united, there would be no foreign policy to speak of.

But because it is, "we are in the happy position where... Singapore will never be intimidated or bought", Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said yesterday.

Referring to the current world order where many nations are embroiled in fractious politics, he said answers to such problems do not lie in foreign policy.

"You better get the chain of causality right. Fix your domestic conditions first. Create a fair and just society, give everyone hope, equip every Singaporean with the skills needed so they know they have a fair chance of a better future. Then we can have good poli-

tics," he added. "Once you have settled that, you can work out how we can navigate this dangerous new world that is unfolding."

Dr Balakrishnan was speaking at a dialogue at the Singapore Perspectives 2019 conference at Marina Bay Sands, organised by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS).

On maintaining domestic consensus on foreign policy, he said the Cabinet spends "an enormous amount of time" working through the options. He then briefs other parliamentarians, including opposition MPs, about the next course of action.

"Based on my experience so far, no gap, no party politics has intervened with our pursuit of foreign policy," he said.

"I'm going to do my darnedest to maintain this bipartisan consensus... We cannot afford the kind of raucous to-ing and fro-ing that of-

UNITED WE STAND

Based on my experience so far, no gap, no party politics has intervened with our pursuit of foreign policy... I'm going to do my darnedest to maintain this bipartisan consensus... We cannot afford the kind of raucous to-ing and fro-ing that often happens in many other countries. So it's better to take (the opposition) somewhat into confidence, argue it privately, than to display disunity in Parliament.

FOREIGN MINISTER VIVIAN BALAKRISHNAN, on maintaining domestic consensus on foreign policy.



From left: Economic Development Board managing director Chng Kai Fong; moderator Gabriel Lim, permanent secretary at the Ministry of Communications and Information; and CapitaLand group chief executive Lee Chee Koon at a panel discussion on Singapore's international economics position. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

Be more connected to Asean to remain competitive: Panel

Joanna Seow
Manpower Correspondent

The need to understand Asean to seize the region's geographical advantage and stay ahead appears lost on many Singaporeans, and this is a concern for Economic Development Board managing director Chng Kai Fong.

He noted yesterday that many students go abroad for exchange programmes and internships, but the interest is in going to places like Stanford University in the United States or universities in Europe, rather than those in Jakarta or Ho Chi Minh City.

The preference to work in certain cities even had a regional company's chief executive declaring that he had given up on hiring Singaporeans as management trainees, turning to Malaysians instead because they are more enthusiastic, and willing to accept lower wages and take on assignments to places with tougher living conditions, such as Africa and South America.

Recounting the remark, CapitaLand group chief executive Lee Chee Koon said he felt sad when he heard it.

Both men were on a panel discussing Singapore's international economics position, during a ses-

sion moderated by the Ministry of Communications and Information permanent secretary Gabriel Lim.

The session was part of the Institute of Policy Studies' Singapore Perspectives 2019 conference.

Explaining the importance of Asean, Mr Chng said: "We need to get to know Asean better because that's how we're going to make our living, by facilitating the connections in Asean."

But Mr Lee lamented that it was not easy to convince Singaporeans to work in less popular countries, even though being more globally aware and connected will help them stay competitive in the job market.

ten happens in many other countries. So it's better to take (the opposition) somewhat into confidence, argue it privately, than to display disunity in Parliament."

The Workers' Party has, on this front, played its part, he said.

During the dialogue, Dr Balakrishnan was also asked how Singapore can remain neutral in an ongoing politicised race between the United States and China to develop and roll out the fifth generation of mobile communications, or 5G.

"We need the ability to say no from time to time in a principled and disciplined way," he replied.

"We can't simply be more obliging just because someone is a friend or in a position to exercise leverage against us. Once we compromise or oblige in an unprincipled manner, believe me, the next request will come in fast and furious, and people will expect you to compromise."

IPS deputy director Gillian Koh asked the minister why the authorities did not name the state behind the recent SingHealth cyber attack.

"The more relevant question is, given that this is the state of the world... what shall we do about it?" Dr Balakrishnan said.

Beyond technical steps such as encryption and Internet separation, which are already practised, he pointed to the need for more education: "The weakest link is still a human being, and you cannot take humans out of human systems."

He later added: "We decided that simply naming names is not going to make our system secure... It may be of interest to the public but not in the public interest."

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Bilahari weighs in on NS training in the light of actor's death

Arlina Arshad
Regional Correspondent

Retired diplomat Bilahari Kausikan said Singapore has to show it has a "strong deterrent force" in handling bilateral tensions, such as with Malaysia, stressing that national service and realistic military training are vital in achieving this.

He was responding yesterday during an Institute of Policy Studies conference to an audience member, who asked about accountability in the light of the recent death of actor Aloysius Pang after he had an accident during training in New Zealand.

Ms Angie Chew had raised concerns about the ongoing disputes with Malaysia over maritime boundaries and airspace, "because our

young men are put on alert whenever the governments are arguing". She also asked about transparency and accountability "when lives of our young men (are) being put at risk not for war, but at practice".

Mr Kausikan said "there is no substitute for deterrence, given the environment we live in".

"Where there are tensions, with Malaysia in particular, we need to demonstrate that there is a limit beyond which they should not go. They know this very well," he said.

"If we don't demonstrate that from time to time, and that demonstration in turn depends on the broader context for having a strong deterrent force, things are more likely to get out of hand," he added.

On concerns over training safety, Mr Kausikan said standards have been raised over the years and are

taken very seriously, but accidents can still happen despite precautions being taken.

He noted that the Defence Ministry has not been "untransparent" in handling training accidents, and that the Committee of Inquiry will make its findings public.

During the 90-minute session on Singapore and the region, Mr Kausikan and former Indonesian foreign minister Marty Natalegawa spoke on a range of topics from the rivalry between the US and China for dominance and influence to Asean's response to protect the region's security and prosperity.

Ambassador-at-Large Chan Heng Chee, who moderated the panel, asked about Asean's role in mitigating conflicts like the dispute between Singapore and Malaysia.

Mr Kausikan said the regional

bloc has not resolved bilateral disputes and is unlikely to play more than a general role as it is essentially a collection of sovereign states and "can do no more than its members agree by consensus".

Describing the issues as "old" and their substance as "ridiculous", he attributed them to the "incoherence" of the Pakatan Harapan ruling coalition led by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

This "is not going away", he said. "It's a time-tested tactic of Malaysia over many years and many governments that when their politics get incoherent as they are now, we are a useful rallying point, particularly for leaders to rally their Malay ground."

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News analysis

Why actor's death sparked outpouring of public grief

TV viewers' familiarity with him, recognition of NSmen's sacrifices among factors cited



Lim Min Zhang

While the late actor Aloysius Pang rested at his two-day wake in MacPherson Lane, thousands turned up to pay their last respects, including strangers. On Sunday, hundreds of well-wishers lined the streets as Mr Pang was given a send-off to Mandai Crematorium, while many more had expressed sorrow of his death online.

Mr Pang's final Instagram post on his account, which appeared to have been written by one of his brothers, has so far attracted more than 254,000 "likes" and nearly 25,500 comments since it was posted last Wednesday – the day he died in Waikato Hospital in New Zealand, where he was on a military exercise.

One of the comments, typical of many others, went: "Your passing has taught the nation what love, gratitude and kindness is. You will be greatly missed by many (people) from all walks of life. Thank you for serving the nation. Salute, RIP."

The public outpouring of grief appeared more intense than what was witnessed in the four fatal incidents in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) since September 2017.

To observers, the public response could be due to many factors, including Mr Pang being known to many Singaporeans since he started out as a child actor in the 1990s.

Another factor was how he was described as having a bright future, a person who was dedicated to his career.

He was slated to shoot the Channel 8 romance drama My One In A Million next month – the first time he would be playing the main male lead of a drama series.

"Especially for Singaporeans familiar with Mr Pang's television dramas, (his death) was akin to the death of a member in their own families," said Assistant Professor Liew Kai Khiun from the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information at the Nanyang Technological University.

"Aloysius Pang's death probably brought home the realisation that fatalities during national service can happen to anyone, even a celebrity," he said, adding that the incident that happened to the actor also resonated with many men who had shared their experiences

during their own training and operations online.

Corporal First Class (NS) Pang, an armament technician from the 268th Battalion, Singapore Artillery, died last Wednesday, four days after he had sustained serious injury while doing repair work inside the Singapore Self-Propelled Howitzer during an annual live firing exercise in New Zealand.

Associate Professor Tan Ern Ser from the National University of Singapore's sociology department said the number of military training-related deaths since September 2017 has a part to play but "probably only a very small part".

"I don't see the huge turnout as a release of frustration over the number of such deaths," he said.

Prof Tan also pointed out that the fact that the actor appeared earlier to be in a stable condition, before taking a turn for the worst – "which came as a shock" – was also a factor.

Other things including how he was slated to play a lead role in a coming TV serial "may also have contributed to the overwhelming response of sympathy, empathy and a strong feeling of loss".

Mr Ryan Lim, principal consultant for marketing strategy firm QED Consulting, said Mr Pang's relatively young age was a factor, as was his relationship with actress Jayley Woo. "His girlfriend is also a celebrity in her own right. Coupled with his sponsorship deals and his own fan following, whatever happens to him will attract much more attention than the average person," he said.

Ms Belinda Ang, founder and director of strategic communications consultancy thinkBIG Communications, said that social media helped to ensure that audiences could easily catch up with the latest news and helped the issue gain traction.

"It was easy for users to toggle between multiple channels such as the Defence Minister's Facebook, Mediacorp's social news channels, Mr Pang's management's social media, as well as other celebrity's social media to get a full picture of the situation," she said.

Observers believe that there is still strong public recognition of the sacrifices servicemen make.

"However, I do also see from the online reactions over Mr Pang's tragic death that the public does not accept that such deaths are unavoidable as part of military training, and that they demand greater institutional accountability and transparency," said Prof Liew.

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Actor Aloysius Pang's talent manager, Mr Dasmond Koh, shared an Instagram post yesterday afternoon of this picture of a boat at sea, with the location tagged as "Pulau Ubin, Singapore". In the post, Mr Koh wrote that the late actor was "liberated now". PHOTO: DASMOND KOH/INSTAGRAM

Aloysius Pang's ashes scattered at sea

Yip Wai Yee

Actor Aloysius Pang is "liberated now", his parents said, as they scattered his ashes into the sea off Pulau Ubin.

His talent manager, Mr Dasmond Koh, shared this in an Instagram post yesterday afternoon.

Along with a picture of a boat at sea and the location tagged as "Pulau Ubin, Singapore", Mr Koh wrote: "Aloysius' parents would like me to convey this: He is liberated now."

"We sailed across the calm waters on this cloudy afternoon. At a spot near Pulau Ubin, we saw you descend slowly into the sea. This is the final farewell."

"You wouldn't want to trouble anyone. It's so you – the easy-going boy, as always. Thank you for trusting me and for working so hard in the last few years. As you begin your free-spirited adventure, remember to wait for me."

The post was written in Chinese, while an English translation was posted on the Instagram account of Mr Koh's media company, NoonTalkMedia.

Mr Pang died last week after he was seriously injured in the chest and abdomen during NSman training in New Zealand.

The Ministry of Defence said Corporal First Class (NS) Pang Wei



Mr Pang's eldest brother, Mr Jefferson Pang (in pink), leaving Mandai Crematorium yesterday with the late actor's ashes. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

Chong, 28, who was with the 268th Battalion Singapore Artillery, had been carrying out repair works inside a Singapore Self-Propelled Howitzer on Jan 19 when he got caught between the gun barrel as it was being lowered and the cabin.

He was taken to Waikato Hospi-

tal, a regional trauma centre in Hamilton, south of Auckland, where his condition deteriorated, despite undergoing three operations.

His body was flown to Paya Lebar Air Base last Friday. Thousands of people, including fans,

celebrities and politicians, turned up at his wake at the weekend to pay their respects.

On Sunday, he was accorded a military funeral service and was cremated at Mandai Crematorium.

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Region thrives with international law, free trade: Aussie minister

Sue-Ann Tan

Countries will be more secure in a region where international laws and other norms are respected.

They will also be more prosperous when there are open markets that allow for free trade, Australian Minister for Defence Christopher Pyne said yesterday.

He was giving a keynote address at the 7th International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Fullerton Forum: Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD) Sherpa Meeting.

The SLD brings together defence ministers, senior officials and security experts to exchange views on key issues that shape the region's defence and security landscape.

In his speech, Mr Pyne highlighted the importance of forming and maintaining open partnerships in the region and keeping to a rules-based international order.

"In the Indo-Pacific's vast maritime domains, where global commons abound, it is all the more important that free and open access to oceans is fostered and rules governing maritime behaviour are followed," he said.

"Countries will be more secure in a region characterised by respect for international law and other norms, where disputes are resolved peacefully, without the threat or use of coercion or force."

Mr Pyne added that countries can also prosper more when there are open markets that facilitate the



Australian Defence Minister Christopher Pyne, the keynote speaker at the 7th International Institute for Strategic Studies Fullerton Forum: Shangri-La Dialogue Sherpa Meeting, with his Singapore counterpart, Dr Ng Eng Hen, yesterday. PHOTO: SINGAPORE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

free flow of trade, capital, technology and ideas.

In an age where the rules-based global order continues to be challenged, he added, countries must

seek a balance that supports prosperity and helps to protect the interests of all states, both large and small.

Mr Pyne also met Minister for De-

fence Ng Eng Hen. They reaffirmed the close and longstanding bilateral defence relations between Singapore and Australia and both countries' deepening defence coopera-

tion under the Singapore-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

The ministers welcomed the steady progress made in the joint development of training areas and advanced training facilities in Queensland, which will benefit both the Singapore Armed Forces and the Australian Defence Force.

They also discussed regional and international security developments, including the need to enhance regional counter-terrorism cooperation and reaffirmed the value of key security platforms such as the Asean Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus and the Five Power Defence Arrangements in addressing contemporary security challenges.

As part of his visit, Mr Pyne also called on Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the Istana.

This year's SLD Sherpa Meeting began on Sunday and ends today.

Around 90 delegates from countries regularly represented at the SLD are participating in this year's meeting.

The SLD has been hosted in Singapore since 2013.

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Total Defence Day to focus on fake news

Exhibition features key events in 200 years as well as cyber threats

Vanessa Liu

Digital defence will come under the spotlight at this year's Total Defence Day, which falls on Feb 15 – the day Singapore fell to the Japanese in 1942.

Curated by the Singapore Discovery Centre (SDC), Our Next Battlefront exhibition will focus on fake news, disinformation and cyber threats while seeking to heighten public awareness of how these hazards can impact the nation's survival and how individuals can play their part to guard against them.

Last year, Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen said digital defence could become the sixth pillar of total defence, a framework to reflect the multi-dimensional nature of defence, comprising five pillars – social, psychological, military, civil and economic.

In line with this year's bicentennial celebrations to commemorate Sir Stamford Raffles' arrival in Singapore in 1819, the first part of the



This year's Total Defence Day will feature the exhibition Our Next Battlefront, which will focus on fake news, disinformation and cyber threats while seeking to heighten public awareness of how these hazards can impact the nation's survival and how individuals can play their part to guard against them. ST PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID

exhibition highlights 30 key incidents over the past 200 years of Singapore's history that have threatened national peace and security.

Some were fuelled by false claims, rumours and propaganda, and the exhibition also details the lessons that can be learnt from them. Among the incidents featured are the Maria Hertogh riots, the hijack of Singapore Airlines flight SQ117 and the escape and arrest of terror suspect Mas Selamat.

The second part of the exhibition

focuses on present-day threats on the digital front that could compromise national security, including cyber attacks on critical infrastructure – such as the recent SingHealth data breach – and the rising incidence of fake news.

The final part suggests ways in which individuals can guard against fake news and disinformation campaigns, which have the power to cause unrest in multi-ethnic and multicultural Singapore.

The exhibition has been put to-

gether with archival materials from the National Archives of Singapore and also features interactive stations such as one where visitors have to decide whether to "forward" or "delete" a piece of news that they have received from their loved ones on WhatsApp.

Said the SDC's executive director, Brigadier-General (Ret) Lowrence Chua: "This exhibition features historical key incidents of unrest, rumours and propaganda as well as recent cases of fake news and cyber

threats. We hope our visitors can understand the consequential impact better, and be prepared to do our part in our next battlefront."

The exhibition opens today and runs until March 24 at the SDC.

Admission is free for all Singaporeans and permanent residents (PRs). Non-citizens and non-PRs can find the various pricing packages for the exhibition at www.sdc.com.sg

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Singtel, Argus to develop cyber-security solutions for self-driving vehicles

Hariz Baharudin

Telco Singtel will work with a global leader in automotive cyber-security – Argus Cyber Security – to create a secure ecosystem to position Singapore at the forefront of connected and autonomous vehi-

cle (AV) technologies, the firms announced yesterday.

Commercial and industrial AVs are increasingly becoming a reality here.

From 2022, residents of Punggol, Tengah and the Jurong Innovation District will be the first in Singapore to ride driverless vehicles.

A number of organisations, including ST Engineering, the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University, are running their AVs through a battery of tests.

Meanwhile, self-driving car

start-up nuTonomy is pushing to become the first in the world to roll out a driverless taxi system.

They all share a need for a safe cyber environment to operate in.

In a joint release, Singtel and Argus announced they have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to work on solutions to bolster cyber security in the field of connected cars and self-driving vehicles.

The developed solutions can be applied to other countries as well.

A platform developed by Argus – which has offices in Tel Aviv, Michi-

gan, Silicon Valley, Stuttgart and Tokyo – will collect, correlate and analyse data from vehicles, mobile applications, cellular networks, cloud platforms and other sources.

The data will provide clues if a vehicle is facing a cyber attack, and allow for the attack to be blocked.

Singtel told The Straits Times that the solutions will not require vehicles to be recalled for software updates.

Instead, in the event of a cyber threat, an original equipment manufacturer or fleet manager can issue an over-the-air update to

change the software in the vehicles and immunise them from attacks.

This would also minimise downtime for the fleet.

Singtel chief executive officer of group enterprise Bill Chang said: "With a secure ecosystem, automobile manufacturers and automotive equipment providers can safely collaborate and develop advanced solutions for commercial and industrial autonomous vehicles."

Singtel and Argus will be conducting research and develop-

ment at the Singtel Cyber Security Institute, which opened in Singapore in 2016, to put the solutions they have developed through rigorous testing and prototyping.

Mr Ofer Ben-Noon, co-founder and chief executive officer of Argus, said: "This partnership is another important leap forward towards delivering multi-layered security solutions and services that make mobility intelligent and secure – in Singapore and around the world."

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Police end trial extension of Clarke Quay liquor hours after rise in crimes

Tiffany Fumiko Tay

A trial extension to liquor licensing hours for certain operators at Clarke Quay has been ended by the police after four months.

Last August, selected nightclubs and bars at the party hot spot were given some reprieve from stricter controls in the area that were introduced in 2013.

They were allowed to sell alcohol for an extra hour every Friday night – until 4am on Saturday – instead of being allowed to do so on just two Fridays a month.

The move came after nightclubs there said the curtailed hours had hurt business, with long-time tenant Shanghai Dolly blaming them for its demise in April last year.

But it is now back to the status quo after the police found that certain crimes had increased.

Under the 2013 rules aimed at curbing drunken crimes in the entertainment and nightlife district, bars and clubs in Clarke Quay could no longer sell liquor until 6am; they had to stop by 4am on Sundays and public holidays and by 3am the rest of the week.

The trial extension of liquor licensing hours, part of a gradual relaxation of rules that began in 2016, kicked off in August last year for applicants that had not breached their

liquor licensing conditions in the prior three months.

These included nightclubs Zouk, Attica and Highlander bar.

The police told The Straits Times that Clarke Quay's management and tenants had committed to enhancing their security measures during the trial period, such as by increasing the number of patrols and security officers deployed.

But public order crimes, which include disorderly behaviour and voluntarily causing hurt, rose by 7 per cent during the trial period compared with the same period in 2017.

The police said they therefore discontinued the extended liquor licensing hours when the trial ended. Licensees can still apply for the extra hour on two Fridays a month, though businesses have said that inconsistent hours can be confusing for patrons.

Nightclubs said that they saw sales increase by up to 20 per cent during the trial period, and expressed disappointment at the decision to pull back the hours.

A spokesman for Zouk said that while there are other factors at play when assessing the long-term viability of its presence in Clarke Quay, the curtailed licensing hours "affect decisions in securing sought-after acts as it makes it tougher for them to be commercially viable".



Singapore Nightlife Business Association (SNBA) president Joseph Ong said the outcome was not what stakeholders had hoped for, though it is not the end of the road.

The association, which represents more than 300 nightlife operators here, is leading discussions with the authorities on creating an accreditation scheme to distinguish those that meet certain training and management standards.

It is also pushing for different liquor licensing hours for different types of operators.

"Some require later licences and some don't," said Mr Ong. "Having a more measured approach to licensing arrangements also means that those toeing the line will not be penalised along with others."

Efforts to tackle alcohol-related incidents are also happening at the

consumer end.

The Singapore Alliance for Responsible Drinking (Sard), a partnership between the SNBA and the European Chamber of Commerce's wine, spirits and beer committee, kicked off its first campaign last month targeting binge drinking among the young.

Mr Davide Besana, vice-chairman of the committee, said the alliance is also looking at scaling up training for bar staff to identify and prevent alcohol-related incidents.

"We can work together to identify problems before they escalate, such as by ensuring that all the security staff at bars are linked up, so when someone gets refused entry in one area, they don't get admitted in another," he said.

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The police said that public order crimes, which include disorderly behaviour and voluntarily causing hurt, rose by 7 per cent during the trial period compared with the same period in 2017. ST FILE PHOTO

Intelligence chief to be perm sec at Mindef from March

The director of the Security and Intelligence Division at the Ministry of Defence (Mindef), Mr Joseph Leong, will be appointed Permanent Secretary (Defence Development) on March 1.

The 48-year-old will step down from his current role and take over the position which has been vacant since Mr Neo Kian Hong left it on Aug 1 last year to become the chief executive of SMRT.

Mr Leong will also be appointed concurrently as Second Permanent Secretary (Communications and Information) (Designate) with effect from March 1 and take over the role from April 1.

Mr Leong joined the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) in 1990 and was awarded the President's and SAF (Overseas) Scholarship.

He was appointed to the Administrative Service in 1995 and in the course of his 24-year military career, rose to the rank of rear-admiral and held various key appointments.

These included fleet commander, director of military intelligence, chief of command, control, communications, computers and intelligence, and head of the SAF's Joint Plans and Transformation Department.

Mr Neo previously worked in the SAF and held other appointments in the public sector for over 30 years, including permanent secretary in education development at the Ministry of Education from 2013 to 2017.

Vanessa Liu



Security and Intelligence Division director Joseph Leong will be appointed Mindef Permanent Secretary (Defence Development) on March 1, and Second Permanent Secretary (Communications and Information) (Designate) from March 1 and taking over the role from April 1.



Honing CSI skills with VR

Home Team Academy using tech to train crime scene investigators

Fabian Koh

The Home Team Academy (HTA) has incorporated virtual reality (VR) technology into its training for crime scene investigators, taking advantage of the digital habits of a new generation of personnel. Since end-2017, 210 senior officers in seven batches have been trained on the immersive platform, which simulates the real world. The Home Team School of Criminal Investigation of the Singapore Police Force, located at HTA in Old Choa Chu Kang Road, collaborated with the Office of the Chief Science and Technology Officer to develop the technology. Showcased last Friday, it featured a VR headset linked to a multi-directional treadmill that allowed the user to walk around a virtual crime scene and interact with it. The system detects hand gestures and movements. The hardware cost about \$15,000 per set-up, according to an HTA spokesman. VR training allows for a realistic

but safe and controlled learning environment for trainees, who can hone their decision-making skills without fear of making mistakes, said the spokesman. They can learn about gathering facts from first responders and witnesses, and survey, collect and process evidence at the crime scene. These include placing placards to label pieces of evidence, testing whether items at the crime scene have traces of blood, and taking photos of the scene and evidence for documentation. The spokesman said this training approach suits the new generation of learners who grew up as “digital kids”, with a preference for “self-directed and self-paced learning”. “The project also aims to bring about savings in physical space requirements, procurement of props as well as storage space for props,” the spokesman added. “The use of VR simulation reduces the chore of physical set-up and improves the turnaround time between each practical session.” Senior crime scene specialist Wong Jun Yan, 27, is among those who have benefited from the new technology. Having been in the service for a year, Mr Wong, a civilian officer with the forensics division



Above: The virtual reality (VR) platform allows trainees to hone their decision-making skills in a realistic but safe learning environment. Left: ST reporter Fabian Koh trying out the VR set-up, which allows the user to interact with a virtual crime scene. The system detects hand gestures and movements. ST PHOTOS: JONATHAN CHOO

of the Forensics Management Branch, said using VR simulation helps him incorporate what he learnt from multiple modules in the classroom during the course into one session. “If they (trainers) want to teach us a module on how to dust for fingerprints, they will go and set up a scene just for that,” he said. “This (VR system) has a lot more elements to it. It feels more realistic in the sense that when you approach it, you will know that you’re not attacking just a specific module, but the whole entire scene.” He said the training felt immersive as it also incorporated the other individuals who would be at a crime scene, including first responders and passers-by.

The Home Team’s adoption of VR technology is part of moves to prepare its officers with the skills necessary for when they are deployed in the field. In September 2017, HTA started a trial for a mobile classroom (MobiC), to train front-line officers using VR at any neighbourhood police centre. At the push of a button, MobiC opens up to occupy three carpark spaces, and can train 16 officers in 40 minutes. The trial is ongoing, with the project team studying feedback and assessing the continued use of this system to augment training for front-line officers, said the HTA spokesman.

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Ryde secures investment, names new chairman

Toh Ting Wei

Local transportation start-up Ryde has secured an undisclosed sum from investment firm Nomad X and appointed the firm’s director as its chairman. The money will be used to expand its operations, roll out new features, enhance its payment features and increase the technical expertise of its team, Ryde said yesterday. Ryde’s new chairman Tan Suan Jin, who is the director and chief investment officer of Nomad X, told The Straits Times that discussions on the deal had started since the middle of last year. “Ryde has always been very focused on building a good product for the users, so hopefully we can help it think strategically from the longer-term perspective (in terms of) how to grow this business, how to make it sustainable,” said Mr Tan. “We are committed to growing Ryde and helping it establish its space within the whole Singapore ecosystem quite firmly.” Ryde chief executive officer and founder Terence Zou said the investment was part of normal fund-raising efforts in a start-up. He added that Mr Tan’s appointment as chairman would enable Ryde to tap his experience. Mr Tan has held senior positions in companies such as asset manager BlackRock and financial services firm Thidrock Group. The developments at Ryde come amid a backdrop of online complaints from drivers about delays in receiving their earnings, with a few drivers also speculating about cash flow problems at the start-up. A Ryde spokesman told ST that more than 100 drivers had been affected by delayed payments. The start-up has signed up about 15,000 private-hire drivers and about 35,000 carpool drivers. But Mr Zou said the delays were due to technical issues that occurred when Ryde was upgrading its system to enable an instant cash-out feature for drivers. Work on the system started in November and was completed this month. Almost all the cases of delayed payments have been resolved, he added. Said Mr Tan: “It was not a business viability issue because business continued to run. If it wasn’t viable, then we wouldn’t have been involved as well.” Despite the presence of ride-hailing giants Grab and Gojek in Singapore, Ryde can still establish itself here, Mr Tan said, adding: “I think there is room for a player like Ryde to exist.”

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NOT A VIABILITY ISSUE

It was not a business viability issue because business continued to run. If it wasn’t viable, then we wouldn’t have been involved as well.



RYDE CHAIRMAN TAN SUAN JIN, on drivers’ delayed payments.

17 arrested for allegedly smuggling 3,740 cartons of contraband cigarettes

Ng Huiwen

Seventeen men were arrested for allegedly smuggling more than 3,700 cartons of contraband cigarettes via Sungei Jurong last Saturday. In a joint statement yesterday, the police and Singapore Customs said the 14 Indonesians and three Singaporeans had evaded duty and goods and services tax (GST) totalling about \$396,200 and \$28,820 respectively. The men, aged between 22 and 48, had allegedly tried to smuggle a total of 3,740 cartons and 448 pack-

ets of contraband cigarettes. The contraband cigarettes, two foreign-registered supply vehicles and two Singapore-registered vehicles were seized. Singapore Customs is investigating the case. Police Coast Guard commander Cheang Keng Keong commended the officers for the swift arrest. The senior assistant commissioner of police added that the authorities will continue to take firm action against such offenders. Those who buy, sell, convey, deliver, store, keep, possess or deal in contraband cigarettes can be fined

up to 40 times the amount of duty and GST evaded, and/or jailed for up to six years. Vehicles used in the commission of such offences may also be forfeited. The public can call the Singapore Customs hotline on 1800-233-0000 or e-mail customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg to provide information on smuggling activities or evasion of Customs duty or GST. They can also use the Customs@SG mobile app to report these illegal activities.

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The men allegedly tried to smuggle 3,740 cartons and 448 packets of contraband cigarettes, which were seized, together with two foreign-registered supply vehicles and two Singapore-registered vehicles. PHOTO: SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE

BON VOYAGE

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Maids get work skills certified in pilot scheme

Centre for Domestic Employees assessment will help address gap in expectations of maids, bosses

Cara Wong

A programme to assess and certify a foreign maid's household skills is being piloted by the Centre for Domestic Employees (CDE) in a bid to address the different work expectations of the workers and their employers.

The organisation, an NTUC initiative which looks after the needs of maids here, found in a 2017 survey that many employers felt that their workers were not adequately trained, despite the workers' claims that they have undergone training.

Such a significant mismatch in expectations often leads to disharmony, CDE executive director Shamsul Kamar Mohamed Razali said during the organisation's third anniversary celebrations yesterday at NTUC Centre.

"It's actually a perception mismatch. Every home is different – you may be a bit more lenient, but I may not; you might have standards that are higher and so on and so forth," said Mr Shamsul.

CDE's survey found that only about half (54 per cent) of the 1,004 employers surveyed felt that their maids were adequately trained.

In contrast, nearly all of the 1,012 workers surveyed claimed to have undergone training.

"Our larger picture is to assure Singaporean employers that those with (the certification) have got the skill sets, and you know that they are quality (workers)," said Mr



The Centre for Domestic Employees found that only half of the 1,004 employers it surveyed felt that their maids were adequately trained. In contrast, nearly all of the 1,012 workers surveyed claimed to have undergone training. ST FILE PHOTO

BIG PICTURE

Our larger picture is to assure Singaporean employers that those with (the certification) have got the skill sets, and you know that they are quality (workers).



MR SHAMSUL KAMAR MOHAMED RAZALI, Centre for Domestic Employees executive director, who says the organisation is working with employment agencies to assess newly recruited maids.

Shamsul, adding that CDE is working with employment agencies to assess newly recruited maids.

The programme – called the Assessment-Only-Pathways skills certification framework – could also encourage employment agents to step up their maid training, added Mr Shamsul.

It was developed by the organisation together with NTUC LearningHub.

Since October last year, about 30 workers have undergone the assessment, which tests their skill in performing household chores such as cleaning, ironing and cooking.

The workers pay \$50 for the assessment and they receive a certificate on completion.

The programme has been welcomed by employers such as Madam Esther Chan.

The 72-year-old retired administrative assistant said she has had to coach many of the maids she hired.

She added: "Its definitely better to have this assessment. Someone must step in to check them."

More maids have also approached CDE for help, Mr Shamsul revealed.

Where maids can get or give aid

Other new initiatives announced by the Centre for Domestic Employees (CDE) during its third anniversary celebration:

• **Last-mile assistance support:** A CDE initiative in conjunction with the Singapore Red Cross Society that aims to help sick or injured maids get home safely when they are repatriated. The organisations are looking at having a Singapore Red Cross volunteer accompany the worker on the trip, while a Red Cross volunteer from the receiving country takes over once they arrive.

• **Volunteer opportunities with the Association for Persons with Special Needs (APSN):** Workers will volunteer with the APSN Centre for Adults to teach its trainees skills such as labelling, packing of items and general cleaning.

• **Engagement programmes in CDE's shelter:** The CDE is working with The Salvation Army to provide engagement activities and programmes to meaningfully engage workers during their stay in the CDE Shelter, which looks after distressed maids.

Last year, it handled 1,358 cases, of which about half involved maids who needed advice on employment issues or who needed intervention from the authorities.

It also sheltered 373 workers in distress last year, more than twice

the number in 2017.

This increase is attributed to more maids being aware of the organisation's existence and the help that it offers, said Mr Shamsul.

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Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs Amrin Amin, flanked by Commissioner of Prisons Desmond Chin (foreground) and Industrial and Services Co-Operative Society board chairman Daniel Teo, speaking to Singapore Prison Service Cluster B Superintendent Faisal Mustaffa (on screen) at iCosy Hub's televisiting room. PHOTO: INDUSTRIAL & SERVICES CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY



New televisiting facility caters to inmates' families

Shabana Begum

During his roughly 30 years spent in and out of prison, one of the biggest regrets former offender Selvarajan Isaac Shadrak had was the effect his imprisonment had on his mother.

Without technology like teleconferencing, she had to make the physical journey to see him. It took her hours to travel by public transport from Pasir Panjang to Changi Prison in the 1980s and, while waiting to see her son in prison, Madam

Viola Shadrak would also often get emotional as she listened to the stories of other family members with incarcerated relatives.

Teleconferencing facilities, allowing families of inmates to chat with them from remote locations via video conferencing, were introduced in Singapore only in 1999.

Over the years, eight televisiting facilities have sprouted in prison link centres, family centres and community centres. The ninth televisiting facility was opened last Friday at the Industrial and Services Co-Operative Society (Iscos) in

Alexandra Road to cater to families living in the area.

"Televisiting rooms are very helpful because they offer privacy," said Mr Selvarajan, 67, who works as a programme coordinator and volunteers at Iscos. He was released from prison in 2001.

At Iscos' newly opened iCosy Hub, which has a televisiting room among other features, the goal is to offer stronger support to former offenders and families of inmates.

Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs Amrin Amin, the guest of honour at the launch, said the facility "performs a very useful function, where (former offenders) can come together in a cosy place and eat, talk and get help for various issues – from appointments to speaking to each other to bonding".

The local convicted inmate population as of 2017 numbered over 10,200, comprising 8,885 penal inmates and 1,360 Drug Rehabilitation Centre inmates. All are eligible to meet their family members. Visits

are capped at twice a month, and family members can choose to have either one face-to-face visit and one televisit, or two televisits.

For former offender Subin, 35, who declined to give his full name, the chance to see his parents and loved ones while serving his sentence at Changi Prison from 2009 to 2010 was critical to his well-being. His then girlfriend Vita, now his wife, travelled from her workplace in Toa Payoh to Changi to visit him every month. She would skip lunch and work till late to make up for the time away. She also used the televisiting service at the former Toa Payoh Prison Link Centre.

To pass the time, Subin, who is now a freelance commercial diver and logistics driver, would read widely in prison to the delight of his family. "It gave them the confidence that I was not behaving badly any more, but I was reforming inside, and it gave them hope."

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Youth posed online as female sex workers, cheated 16 men

Shaffiq Alkhatib

A male teenager went online and pretended to be two different female sex workers, duping 16 men of \$3,200 when they tried to engage the women's services.

Polytechnic student Lee Chao Hunt, 19, pleaded guilty in court yesterday to five cheating charges. They involve five victims who had transferred over \$1,000 in all.

The remaining 12 charges involving 11 other men and an additional \$2,200 will be considered during sentencing. One man was cheated twice.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Michelle Tay said that in 2016, Lee created an account on online classified advertisement network Locanto to meet "potential romantic interests".

While browsing the site, he came across an advisory, warning users of scams involving netizens who pretended to offer sexual services and sell pornographic videos.

He then planned a similar ruse and created two other Locanto accounts from December that year, and pretended to be female sex workers.

Lee created advertisements and offered sexual services in exchange for cash.

While browsing the Locanto website, the victims came across these advertisements and contacted the teenager via the portal's messaging platform.

DPP Tay said: "The accused lied to each of the victims that he was female. Using the fictitious per-

sonas of Jess or Alicia, the accused promised the victims that he would meet the victims to have sexual intercourse.

"In some instances, the accused also promised to send the victim pornographic videos of the fictitious Jess or Alicia having sexual intercourse with another person."

Lee made these promises on the condition that the victims transfer a sum of \$200 to his bank account. The men did as they were told, the court heard.

After receiving the money, Lee ignored their messages and skipped meetings he had arranged with them.

The DPP told District Judge May Mesenas: "In some instances, the accused would send the victims fake pornographic videos and pass them off as being videos of the fictitious Jess or Alicia. However, the accused never delivered on the sexual services he promised to all the victims."

Court documents did not state how his offences came to light but his bank account was frozen by Dec 1, 2017, when the police conducted their investigation.

Lee later admitted that he had spent his ill-gotten gains on items such as cigarettes and clothes. He has made a full restitution to all 16 victims on Nov 14 last year.

Judge Mesenas has called for a report to assess his suitability for probation. He is now out on bail of \$15,000 and will be back in court on Feb 25.

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Jail, fine for harassing and hurting wife, stepdaughter

Enraged after finding out that his wife had thrown away a cupboard, a man tried to choke the woman and punched his eight-year-old stepdaughter when she started crying.

The 35-year-old man, who cannot be named due to a gag order to protect his victims' identities, was sentenced yesterday to 15 weeks' jail and a fine of \$2,000. He pleaded guilty to one count each of assault,

harassment and ill-treating a child.

The man was in a foul mood when he returned to his flat near Chinatown at around 7pm on March 8, 2017. His wife, baby son and stepdaughter were home at that time.

He noticed his cupboard was missing when he entered the flat. He asked his wife, 30, where it was and became angry when she said she had thrown it away as it was broken.

He scolded her and told her to get it back. She replied that she could not retrieve it as she had thrown it into a bin. He then told her he would "break her face", before dragging her by her hair to a corner of the flat.

After that, he choked her until she had difficulty breathing and punched her face twice.

His terrified stepdaughter burst into tears but her cries only irri-

tated him.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Joshua Rene Jeyaraj said: "The accused then approached her and punched her on the left eye. He yelled at the second victim and told her to shut up. He then tried to throw another punch at the second victim but was pushed away by the first victim before he could do so."

The man redirected his attention

to his wife and punched her lower back. She told the girl to hide behind her and managed to calm her husband down.

He then gave his victims 30 minutes to get the cupboard back.

His wife then sent a text message to the police to ask for assistance.

The court heard that he initially refused to allow officers to enter the flat when they arrived at the scene and relented only after "much persuasion", said the DPP.

He was arrested and his two victims sought medical attention.

The woman was found to suffer mild tenderness in her nose area

and right cheek while the girl had a bruise over her left eye.

The woman later obtained a personal protection order against her husband and it was issued on April 10, 2017.

But on Jan 4 last year at around 8pm, she received a call from him, accusing her of being a sex worker.

He continued calling her after she hung up.

By 9pm that day, she had received 88 missed calls and answered another eight, the court heard.

The couple have since divorced.

Shaffiq Alkhatib

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Hey, I heard you have a new pet!

Tadpole from the longkang

Make long-service recognition ceremonies more meaningful

Those organising long-service recognition ceremonies should consider making such events a more personal experience for those receiving the award.

At such ceremonies, often what happens is that the head of the organisation gives a speech, after which recipients are ushered into queues. The awardees' names are then called out and they dutifully troop onto the elevated stage to collect their scrolls and pose for an

obligatory photo. Compare this with a recent recognition ceremony at a medical school for the graduating class of 1980.

The doctors, many of whom are nearing retirement age, were being honoured for their contribution to the medical field as successful alumni of the school.

As each doctor went up to the stage to be adorned with a shawl by the dean, two photos filled

the entire backdrop.

One was a photo of the doctor as a student at admission, and the other was a current photograph.

The recipients were surprised and honoured that the school had retained their student admission photos from almost 40 years ago, at an age where digital records did not exist, and had thoughtfully retrieved them for display at that ceremony.

It was a touching gesture that recognised the individual through his journey in time.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if long-service award ceremonies recognised their employees similarly too?

Jairaj Ramanathan

Legalise surrogacy for childless couples

While there are no explicit laws banning surrogacy in Singapore, in practice, health institutions here are not allowed to offer it (Hard choices on surrogacy in Singapore; Jan 17).

The Ministry of Health (MOH) allows for fertility clinics, but discourages surrogacy.

If Singapore is serious about remedying its declining birth rate, perhaps MOH should legalise local surrogacy for childless couples who are unable to conceive even with fertility treatments.

Surrogacy gives a couple the joy of being able to watch their baby grow up from the very beginning.

Adoption can be a long and tedious process, and couples may also prefer surrogacy as the child will bear their genes.

Infertile couples deserve the chance to be happy parents. They should not be denied the option of surrogacy if they are able to find someone willing to carry the baby for them.

Surrogacy is a matter of choice, not morality. It simply provides a means to the end of allowing a couple to have a child. While it may be a controversial issue, there is room for discussion and understanding among those concerned.

Why should the state stand in the

way of a couple's desire or decision to have children? As long as there is informed consent and no one is taking advantage of anyone else, legal surrogacy should be made available.

I acknowledge that more research needs to be done before taking this step. To avoid unintended consequences, it is important for MOH to make sure that all aspects of surrogacy have been looked into, such as the welfare of the surrogate mother.

MOH should consider conducting a pilot trial for surrogacy, instead of closing the door entirely.

Cheng Choon Fei

Do more to protect interests of employers

It is difficult not to disagree with the report by the Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics and Hong Kong-based anti-trafficking group Liberty Shared (Report suggests maids at risk of forced labour; Jan 16).

First, the report was based on 2,832 complaints it received from April 2017 to March last year, instead of general opinions of foreign domestic workers (FDW) in Singapore.

Basing the conclusion of forced labour on only about 1 per cent of the 250,000-strong FDW population here lodging complaints raises a red flag. These should instead be treated as anomalies due to irresponsible employers.

Second, FDWs certainly do not fit the International Labour Organisation's definition of forced

labour, which is described as a person "under the menace of any penalty and for which (he) has not offered himself voluntarily".

While a small proportion of employers do impose their own penalties on their FDWs, these are illegal and are dealt with legally.

Furthermore, the work FDWs do, such as cleaning, cooking or taking care of elderly people or children, involves tasks that they are expected to do and is therefore voluntary.

I am mostly flabbergasted by suggestions such as allowing FDWs to switch employers freely with clear notice periods (More protections suggested; Jan 16). Doing so will put a great burden on prospective employers who have to put down significant initial payments, such as for placement

fees and airline tickets, to bring the FDW here.

While extending the Employment Act to allow regulated working hours, sick leave or overtime pay are commendable ideas, these are not feasible. Let us not forget that these FDWs work and sleep in the employers' houses, where resources are also being spent for their well-being.

The Government has also introduced various measures to improve the working conditions for FDWs, such as a weekly rest day.

More should be done to protect the interests of FDW employers instead. Scouring websites, I have observed that there appears to be more complaints from helpless employers than from FDWs.

Charles Yast

NewsEd

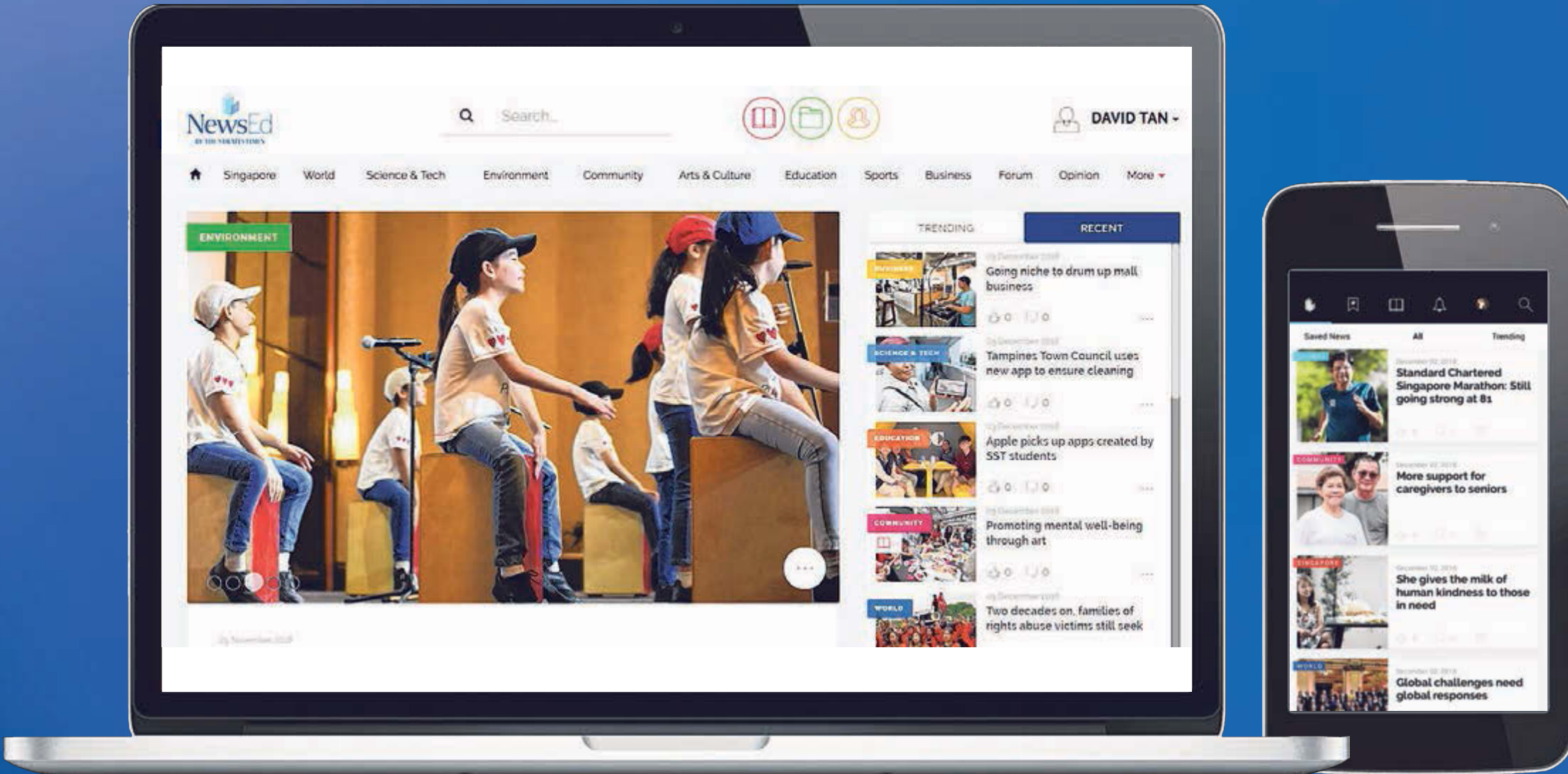
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THE TRAINERS




Azhar Kasman is the Editor of Stomp, SPH's award-winning citizen-journalism site, and also a Content Strategist for SPH's English, Malay, Tamil Media Group. Besides his editorial duties, Azhar explores new digital technologies and innovations for the newsroom and works closely with business clients to help them conceptualise and execute their digital content strategies.

Navjot Pawera is the director and head of design at Buuuk, a Singapore-based tech studio that has helped government and private organisations win international awards with their innovative digital solutions. He had previously worked with clients in India and Norway before working in Singapore.

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Walking tall for Chingay

Among the highlights of the Chingay procession on Feb 12, 1975, were stilt-walkers, led by two men dressed in black, wearing top hats and carrying mandarin oranges. The parade in Queenstown was organised by the People's Association and Federation of Pugilistic Association.

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Sustainability a growing part of corporate agendas: Report

In study of 297 global firms, 81% say issues like climate change more important to businesses than 5 years ago

Sue-Ann Tan

Sustainability is becoming more important to companies though there is still a long way to go for businesses to improve the way they impact society and the environment.

In a study by consulting firm Bain & Co involving 297 global firms released yesterday, 81 per cent said sustainability is more important to their business today than it was five years ago.

About 85 per cent also believe it will be even more important in five years. The report said: "Climate change, unfair labour practices, corruption and other sustainability issues have become daily fixtures in newspaper headlines and are rapidly taking their place alongside financial targets as top chief executive officer priorities."

"Sustainability is now incorporated into two-thirds of companies' core missions. Signatories of the United Nation's Principles for Responsible Investment now represent over half of the world's institutional assets, and major investors like BlackRock are calling for companies to serve a social purpose."

However, the report said more can be done. It said: "Among companies surveyed, 99 per cent believe we need to either maintain a fast pace of progress or increase the pace of progress."

"These companies recognise that our current trajectory will have immense human and financial costs."

The study added that this is especially urgent as recent reports have predicted that there is only a 5 per

cent chance of meeting the Paris Agreement targets for emissions reduction.

Leading companies will adopt new practices over the next five years, going beyond the basics of sustainability strategies, it said.

For instance, instead of focusing on optimising their own operations and value chains, leading firms are working with partners to address root causes and achieve real system changes at scale, the report added.

Rather than incremental improvements, these companies will also create a vision of what their future will look like in a sustainable economy, and then craft an objective to fit that vision, the report said.

Now, only 9 per cent of companies have such sustainability ambitions, but this is set to grow to 26 per cent over the next five years, it added.

Experts said this global trend of companies making sustainability a bigger part of their business is also reflected in Singapore.

Associate Professor Lawrence Loh from the National University of Singapore Business School said: "One important signal is that the percentage of Singapore-listed companies with sustainability communication has increased from 31.3 per cent to 48.2 per cent since 2014. By May 2018, 327 out of 678 companies have produced their sustainability reports."

However, only 277 out of 327 companies disclosed their performance targets, and only 201 discussed their actual performance.

Said Prof Loh: "This is interesting as more companies seemed to reveal targets but not performances. It also implies that many companies have yet to establish a performance measurement system to track their progress."

Ms Maggie Lee, market transformation manager at the World Wide Fund for Nature, Singapore, said: "Motivated by consumer expectations or investor pressure, companies here are now benchmarking their practices to global standards, on issues such as plastic reduction, sustainable sourcing and waste management."

"To operate in this new era of sustainable development, superficial definitions of corporate social responsibility are not enough. Sustainability needs to be integrated into key business decisions on sourcing, product design and point-of-sale considerations."

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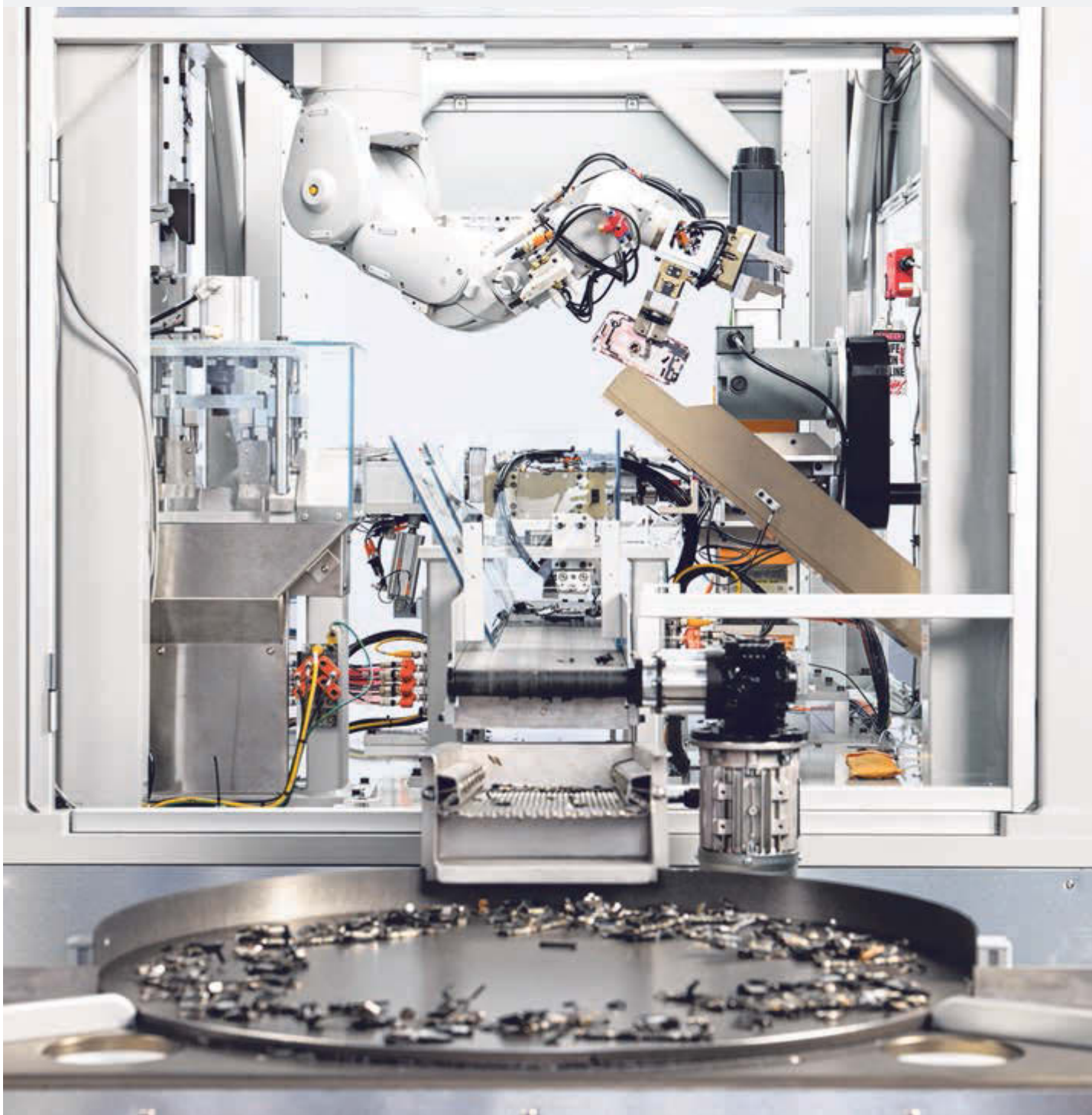
CALL TO SERVE SOCIAL PURPOSE

Sustainability is now incorporated into two-thirds of companies' core missions. Signatories of the United Nation's Principles for Responsible Investment now represent over half of the world's institutional assets, and major investors like BlackRock are calling for companies to serve a social purpose.



A BAIN & COMPANY STUDY, involving 297 global companies, which was released yesterday by the consulting firm.

How companies are working towards sustainability



With 81 per cent of companies surveyed feeling that sustainability is more important to their business today than five years ago, the Bain and Company report looks at various firms and what they have done to become more sustainable.

ADIDAS

The global sports brand sold more than 1 million pairs of shoes made with "ocean plastic" in 2017, combining an environmentally friendly proposition with desirable design and performance.

The product of a collaboration between Adidas and environmental organisation Parley for the Oceans, the shoes were made from upcycled waste from

beaches and coastal communities that is intercepted before it reaches the ocean. This is a sustainable option that companies in the petrochemical-intensive shoe industry are exploring.

APPLE

The global phone brand uses Daisy, a recycling robot, to disassemble and sort used iPhones. According to reports, Daisy is capable of taking apart nine different versions of the iPhone and can disassemble up to 200 iPhones an hour.

NESPRESSO

Nespresso and its non-profit development partner TechnoServe

are working with the United States Agency for International Development to rebuild the coffee industry in South Sudan after it was stifled by the country's civil war. The project seeks to train 1,500 South Sudanese farmers to increase their wages and exports.

More than 700 farmers have attended monthly agronomy training sessions since August 2015.

OLAM INTERNATIONAL

Global agribusiness company Olam International has achieved a number of successes working collaboratively to transform the sustainability and yields of its plantations.

For example, it became the first agribusiness company to achieve the Alliance for Water Stewardship Standard for its Aviv coffee plantation in Tanzania, after working with non-profit organisations and local stakeholders to ensure water security for the 300,000 people living in the surrounding Ruvuma River basin.

WALMART

Retail company Walmart, IBM and others formed the Blockchain Food Safety Alliance to improve supply chain traceability in China. This will enhance food tracking and safety.

Apple's recycling robot, Daisy (above). The global phone brand uses it to disassemble and sort used iPhones. According to reports, Daisy is capable of taking apart nine different versions of the iPhone and can disassemble up to 200 iPhones an hour. PHOTO: APPLE

The Adidas UltraBOOST Parley Limited Edition sneakers (left). They are made from recycled "ocean plastic" – a sustainable option that companies in the petrochemical-intensive shoe industry are exploring. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Sue-Ann Tan

Budget 2019 expected to give more support for 'vulnerable' PMETs

More "forceful policy measures" are expected to tackle the rising vulnerability of professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMETs) in the upcoming Singapore Budget 2019, according to a report by DBS.

This comes as PMETs have become an "exceptionally vulnerable" segment of the labour force amid slowing growth momentum, said DBS senior economist Irvin Seah.

For the past nine years, the percentage share of PMETs among all retrenched workers has been rising, with the share of PMETs among retrenched workers now surpassing that for lower-skilled workers.

"This may suggest that this seg-

ment of the labour force is increasingly facing more difficulties in maintaining their employability," said Mr Seah, author of the report.

"This seems to defy conventional wisdom that being better skilled, the PMETs would be relatively more employable."

This Singapore Budget statement will be delivered on Feb 18 in Parliament by Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat.

Last week, Mr Heng said that the upcoming Budget will focus on the country's growing needs in education and healthcare, as well as security and defence.

Another priority will be to help people face changes in the global economy, he said.

For the past nine years, the percentage share of PMETs among all retrenched workers has been rising, with the share of PMETs among retrenched workers now surpassing that for lower-skilled workers.

Mr Seah expects further enhancement to schemes such as the Professional Conversion Programme (PCP) and the Adapt and Grow initiative, which aim to help job seekers re-skill and acquire the necessary knowledge and competencies to take on new jobs.

The DBS report suggested that the level of wage support could be increased, while more training grants could be provided to upgrade skills and additional resources directed at job matching. A temporary deferment or extension of income tax payment, or a one-off tax rebate for retrenched professionals, could also help.

As for skilled foreign workers, an upward adjustment in the mini-

mum salary requirement for employment pass holders or tighter requirements beyond the Jobs Bank could be considered, said Mr Seah.

With disruptive technologies that could potentially render jobs redundant, there is a need to continue investing in education and skills upgrading, he said.

Mr Seah noted that the upcoming Budget is likely to address longer-term structural issues instead of dwelling on the rising economic risk in the global environment.

"Nonetheless, with the surpluses accrued in the past budgets, the Government is in a good position to roll out strong counter-cyclical fiscal stimulus should economic conditions warrant that," he added.

SGX proposes stricter rules for auditing of listed firms



POWER TO APPOINT SECOND AUDITOR

SGX will be proposing a new power to require the appointment of a second auditor, on top of the existing statutory auditor, but only in exceptional circumstances. This will complement SGX's current power to require the appointment of a special auditor, who will typically only look into a specific area, whereas the second auditor will jointly sign off on the year-end audit together with the first auditor.



MR TAN BOON GIN, CEO of Singapore Exchange Regulation.

Market regulator will conduct public consultation on two proposals following near collapse of Noble Group

The Singapore Exchange (SGX) is moving to tighten the auditing of listed companies with two new rules in one of its biggest overhauls of accountancy oversight.

First, SGX is asking for the power to order a listed company to appoint a second auditor, in addition to the existing one, in "exceptional circumstances".

Second, SGX will propose a change in the listing rules to require all listed companies to appoint a Singapore-based auditor.

The market regulator will be conducting a public consultation on these two proposals.

The move comes in the wake of the near collapse of Singapore-listed Noble Group, once Asia's biggest commodity trader, which was given a clean bill of health for three years even as an attack on its ac-

counting practices was sending its shares plummeting. The company eventually lost 99 per cent of its market value.

Some market observers were critical of Singapore regulators, saying that they did not do enough to protect minority investors as the Noble saga unfolded.

Singapore Exchange Regulation chief executive officer Tan Boon Gin said in a media briefing: "SGX will be proposing a new power to require the appointment of a second auditor, on top of the existing statutory auditor, but only in exceptional circumstances."

"This will complement SGX's current power to require the appointment of a special auditor, who will typically only look into a specific area, whereas the second auditor will jointly sign off on the

year-end audit together with the first auditor."

Mr Tan explained the need for a second audit, saying: "There have been clean audit reports over the years and yet if you still suspect something is amiss, that's when this is most useful to us. Whereas if we knew exactly which area to focus on, we'd just appoint a special auditor to look into that area."

He said SGX has already met the audit committees and auditors of about 15 listed companies to highlight issues it is concerned about based on the regulator's review of the company, and what it expects the audit to cover and to discuss in the key audit matters of the annual report. The latter must include matters the regulator has been constantly querying the firm about.

He also said auditors need to have the "gumption" to flag areas of concern. "If they do find something (amiss with the company), they can't hide behind the terms of reference and say, 'This wasn't covered

under the terms of reference so I didn't look into it'."

"And they shouldn't phrase the language of the report in a language that is so vague that, frankly speaking, we as an exchange cannot take action on it."

SGX has also begun to intervene more actively to ask audit committees to change their terms of reference where they are not to its satisfaction and to require the special auditor to report directly or even exclusively to SGX. "Those appointed to these roles who fail to carry out their responsibilities in a credible manner may find that we will stop them from being appointed again," Mr Tan warned.

SGX also plans for all listed companies to appoint either a Singapore-based auditor, or in the case of companies with significant overseas operations with a foreign auditor, to have a Singapore-based auditor jointly sign off on the year-end audit done by the foreign auditor. "This will give us more regulatory traction,

A photograph of entrepreneurs, including the owner of a local shoe manufacturer, with then Chinese President Hu Jintao during a visit to Spain sits at an industrial complex undergoing demolition along Xiedu Avenue, which translates to "Shoe Capital" avenue, in Wenzhou, China, on Jan 14. In the city made famous by the billionaire entrepreneurs it spawned in the heyday of China's manufacturing ascent, there is now an air of crisis. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG



China industrial profits shrink again in December

BEIJING • Earnings at China's industrial firms shrank for a second straight month in December on slowing prices and sluggish factory activity, piling more pressure on an economy in the grip of its slowest growth in nearly three decades.

The downbeat data points to more troubles ahead for the country's vast manufacturing sector already struggling with a decline in orders, job layoffs and factory closures amid a bitter trade dispute with the United States.

China's economic growth slipped to 6.6 per cent last year, the weakest expansion in 28 years, stoking fears of a sharper slowdown if the current

US-China trade talks fail to stop further tariffs from being implemented after a 90-day truce.

Profits last month fell 1.9 per cent from a year earlier to 680.8 billion yuan (\$136.7 billion), weighed down by weak factory-gate prices and soft demand. This is on top of a decline of 1.8 per cent in November – the first contraction in profits in nearly three years.

For the full year, profits rose 10.3 per cent to 6.64 trillion yuan last year, easing from 2017's robust pace of 21 per cent, the National Bureau of Statistics said yesterday.

Last year's profit gain mostly came from the oil and natural gas ex-

traction industry, along with the ferrous metal and chemical sectors, statistics bureau official He Ping said in a statement along with the data release.

Activity at 2,500 Chinese small and medium-sized enterprises continued to contract in the fourth quarter last year despite a flurry of supportive government policies, a survey from the state planner showed this month.

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Index stood at 93 last quarter, below the 100-mark that separates growth from contraction, according to the National Development and Reform Commission.

Though traders are replenishing inventory ahead of the Chinese New Year holiday early next month, demand remains weak. Aggravating the slowdown, the government has also vowed it will not relent on enforcing anti-pollution controls.

Beijing has promised to increase spending on infrastructure projects this year and boost consumption in areas such as automobile and home appliances.

China's producer prices rose at their slowest pace in more than two years last month. New orders – an indicator of future activity – contracted for the first time in at least a year last month.

Profits at China's state-owned industrial firms rose 12.6 per cent last year from a year earlier, slowing from a 16.1 per cent increase in the January-November period. REUTERS

Weaker US growth ahead, say business economists in survey

WASHINGTON • Forecasters are less optimistic about the US expansion this year, though they are nearly unanimous in their expectations that a recession can be kept at bay until at least 2020, a National Association for Business Economics (NABE) survey showed yesterday.

Two-thirds of respondents expect growth to exceed 2 per cent this year, down from the 90 per cent in the prior survey for the 12 months to the third quarter of 2019, according to the Dec 17-Jan 9 survey of 106 NABE members.

"After a year of robust capital spending, business investment has cooled a bit, and expectations for the next three months slackened similarly," NABE president Kevin Swift, chief economist at the American Chemistry Council, said in a statement released with the survey.

"Fewer firms increased capital spending compared with the October survey responses, but the cutback appeared to be concentrated more in structures than in information and communication technology investments," Mr Swift said.

The results follow reports showing that US manufacturing slumped last month, while consumer sentiment has weakened as the US-China trade war and record government shutdown fuel uncertainty. JP-Morgan Chase & Co and Barclays both cut their first-quarter growth projections last week, citing the effects of the partial closure.

Other takeaways from the survey showed:

- 84 per cent of respondents said that the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act has not spurred plans to change hiring or investment.
- 77 per cent said trade concerns have not caused their companies to change investment, hiring, or pricing, similar to the prior survey.
- 53 per cent report skilled labour shortages at their firms, the most since October 2000 and up from 47 per cent in October.
- 47 per cent said sales at their firms rose in the final quarter of last year, down from 61 per cent in the October survey. BLOOMBERG

Bank bonuses muted; but employer's market may block exit to greener pastures

Singapore banks' bonus likely to be flat to slightly better while it's flat at foreign banks

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Tycoon races to stem crisis after \$2b loss in Zee Entertainment's value

Indian TV network sees shares plunge after news report questioning its link to firm under government probe

MUMBAI • Indian media tycoon Subhash Chandra scrambled at the weekend to contain a crisis that wiped US\$1.6 billion (\$2.18 billion) off his flagship Zee Entertainment Enterprises' market value last Friday and threatened to derail his plans to sell a stake in the company.

Shares of India's biggest television network and its subsidiary Dish TV India plunged more than 25 per cent in the last two hours of trading after news website The Wire published a report questioning the group's links to a company that is being probed by the country's Serious Fraud Investigation Office.

Essel Group, the Chandra-led conglomerate, released statements on Friday and Sunday denying the allegations.

The group reached an understanding with its lenders, who agreed there will not be "any event

of default declared due to the steep fall in price", Essel said on Sunday.

Last Friday, Zee's chief executive officer Punit Goenka told investors

Mr Subhash Chandra, who started Zee in 1992, is seeking a strategic investor to help him fend off competition from Netflix, Amazon.com and hundreds of local TV channels vying to tap India's booming demand for content. Plunging shares may hinder those plans and his attempts at reducing debt.

on a call that the share price plunge will not hit Mr Chandra's plans to sell half of his stake in Zee.

Later that evening, Mr Chandra, 68, issued an open letter blaming poor investments in the infrastructure sector, combined with its exposure to failed lender Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services for the group's rising debt, and apologised to his investors and creditors for the conglomerate's financial woes.

Mr Chandra, who started Zee in 1992, is seeking a strategic investor to help him fend off competition from Netflix, Amazon.com and hundreds of local TV channels vying to tap India's booming demand for content.

Plunging shares may hinder those plans and his attempts at reducing debt. Mr Goenka sought to ease concerns by saying that Zee is also trying to sell stressed assets for an enterprise value of 200 billion rupees (\$3.8 billion).

"There's no change to business fundamentals," analysts Kapil Singh and Siddhartha Bera from Nomura Holdings in Mumbai wrote in a report last Saturday. Zee trades at a "very attractive" valuation, they said, maintaining their buy recommendation on the stock.

Zee is close to selling an infrastructure asset and expects to complete the sale of road and solar power projects by April, Mr Goenka said. Zee's owners have pledged 59 per cent of their shares to lenders as collateral, and the asset sales may help them revoke the pledges.

Friday's slump may have "exacerbated (the) risk of pledges being invoked", CLSA analysts Deeptri



Mr Subhash Chandra's plans to sell half of his stake in Zee Entertainment Enterprises are expected to continue despite the fall in share price. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

Malaysia to put \$7.4b of homes on sale in March

KUALA LUMPUR • Malaysia is planning a sale for US\$5.5 billion (\$7.4 billion) of real estate to bridge the gap between property oversupply and lack of affordable homes, with developers asked to offer at least 10 per cent discount.

The numbers are staggering: About 180 developers will offer 22,000 units worth RM22.5 billion (\$7.4 billion) at the expo planned for March 1 to 3.

About a quarter of the property on offer will be priced at RM300,000 or less, said Housing and Local Government Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin, adding that the transactions will be exempt from stamp duty fee.

"We hope that better discounts will be given to the people, as high as possible," Ms Zuraida said in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

"We are trying to reduce the gap starting from the expo. From then on, we will try to clean up."

The average cost of a Malaysian home was five times the annual median household income in 2016, above the global standard of three times, Bank Negara Malaysia said in a quarterly bulletin posted in August.

Meanwhile, the number of residential units remaining unsold nine months after being completed rose 18 per cent from a year ago to 29,227 units in the first half of 2018, according to the National Property Information Centre.

That is before accounting for almost 100,000 uncompleted units that were coming to the market.

The problem may lie in a mismatch between the type of homes Malaysians are looking to buy and the luxury units that developers keep building.

The central bank estimated that RM282,000 was the maximum price achievable for the median Malaysian household, while actual median house prices were 11 per cent higher, it said in the report.

The ministry will consider affordability in approving future residential projects by accounting for the income level in the area, Ms Zuraida said.

The government will start drafting the Residential Rental Act this year to protect the rights of tenants and landlords, while addressing issues of racial discrimination and quotas for Malays, she said.

BLOOMBERG



Varo Energy runs hundreds of fuel stations throughout the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany. In April, it scrapped plans for an initial public offering due to unfavourable market conditions. It had US\$13.4 billion (\$18 billion) of revenue in 2017. PHOTO: VARO ENERGY

Apple's partners hasten move from China

TAIPEI • Apple Inc's main assemblers are moving more output to India and South-east Asia as trade tensions threaten to escalate costs in their longstanding production base of China.

Hon Hai Precision Industry Co, known also as Foxconn, said over the weekend it is investing more than US\$200 million (\$270 million) in India and Vietnam.

Smaller rival Pegatron Corp said on Sunday it has moved to Indonesia some manufacturing of networking gear hit by rising United States tariffs on Chinese imports, and is now exploring bases in Vietnam and India as well.

While neither explicitly said they are moving production of Apple products, the twin announcements underscore the extent to which the Taiwanese firms that make most of the world's electronics are reconsidering a reliance on the world's second largest economy. From iPhone assemblers like Foxconn and Pegatron to laptop maker Compal Electronics Inc, they're bracing themselves for a fundamental shift in an arrangement that has served them well since the 1980s.

"We have begun shipping from Batam island, Indonesia, in January," Pegatron chief executive offi-

cer Liao Syh-jang told reporters on Sunday. "Whether the US will decide to go ahead with new tariffs on March 1 will be a key impact on the speed of the company's further diversification."

Taiwan's largest corporations form a crucial link in the global tech supply chain, assembling devices from Chinese production bases that the likes of HP Inc and Dell then slap their labels on. That may start to change if tariffs escalate, an outcome in the balance as Washington and Beijing begin thorny negotiations on a trade deal.

Pegatron rose as much as 2.2 per cent in Taipei yesterday, while Hon Hai's shares were mostly unchanged. Mr Liao said it is unlikely that Pegatron will be able to churn out gadgets in Vietnam and India in 2019 since it will take two years to set up new plants. But the firm has also moved some production lines back to the northern Taiwanese cities of Taoyuan and Taipei, he said.

On Saturday, Hon Hai said via a series of filings that it had injected some US\$213.5 million into an Indian unit, and paid for rights to use 250,000 sq m of land in an industrial park in Vietnam's north-eastern Bac Giang province for operations and sales. BLOOMBERG

HK's Cheng family in talks to acquire Varo Energy

HONG KONG • Hong Kong's billionaire Cheng family, which controls a real estate and jewellery empire, is exploring a bid for European fuel supplier Varo Energy, people with knowledge of the matter said.

The companies have held talks about a deal that could value Varo Energy, backed by investors including Carlyle Group, at about US\$2.3 billion (\$3.1 billion), including debt, according to the people.

No final agreements have been

reached, and there is no certainty the negotiations will lead to a transaction, the people said, asking not to be identified because the information is private.

Tycoon Henry Cheng has been pursuing acquisitions as he leads family-owned conglomerate Chow Tai Fook (Holding) beyond its property roots. The group completed its first foray into Australian utilities with the 2017 purchase of power producer Alinta Energy Holdings,

Bloomberg-compiled data show.

Last month, an arm of the family's New World Development agreed to buy a Hong Kong insurer for US\$2.75 billion.

Reggeborgh, a private Dutch investor, and Vitol Group, the world's biggest independent oil trader, also own stakes in Varo.

In April, the company – which has a head office in Switzerland and is registered in the Netherlands – scrapped plans for an initial public offering due to unfavourable market conditions.

Representatives for Varo, Carlyle, Reggeborgh and Vitol declined to comment. A spokesman for the Chengs' publicly traded retail business, Chow Tai Fook Jewellery Group, said she could not immedi-

ately comment on behalf of the family. A representative for their listed property flagship, New World Development, did not immediately respond to e-mailed queries.

The proposed Amsterdam Stock Exchange listing may have valued Varo at as much as US\$2.3 billion, people familiar with the matter have said. Each of the company's three shareholders had planned to sell a third of their shares.

Varo runs hundreds of fuel stations throughout the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany. It also owns stakes in two refineries and controls about three million cubic m of fuel storage capacity, according to its website. The company had US\$13.4 billion of revenue in 2017. BLOOMBERG

Money FM celebrates its first birthday

Leila Lai

Money FM 89.3, Singapore's first and only business and personal finance English radio station, turns one today, celebrating a year marked with challenges as well as proud moments for the team.

From successfully covering Singapore Budget 2018 just weeks after its launch on Jan 29, 2018, to achieving 60 per cent listenership growth within the second half of last year, the SPH Radio station has proved its sceptics wrong and showed it is here to stay.

"A lot of people doubted our ability to do a station like that, because

we have always been an entertainment company," SPH Radio's general manager Sim Hong Huat said.

A subsidiary of Singapore Press Holdings, SPH Radio operates two other English stations, One FM 91.3 and Kiss92, and Mandarin stations 96.3 Hao FM and UFM100.3.

With the biggest event on Singapore's financial calendar as its first major project, there was a lot on the line for Money FM.

"We managed to pull it off and did a very good panel discussion and other programming around the Budget," said Mr Sim. "That's something we're all very proud of."

SPH Radio had identified the need for a business radio station as

early as 2010. However, it was awarded the frequency only in March 2017 and given just nine months to form its team of presenters, conceptualise the new programming format and build the needed infrastructure.

Unlike music stations which broadcast existing content, talk stations require large amounts of fresh content every day, and Money FM works closely with The Business Times and The Straits Times to achieve this.

Presenters must also have broad-based knowledge of financial topics to facilitate interviews with chief executive officers, analysts, thought leaders and politicians.

"We have been successful in reaching out, particularly to our core listeners – the PMEBs (professionals, managers, executives and businessmen) – and the feedback we get is that the market likes what we're putting out there," Money FM's executive editor Ven Sreenivasan said.

"We hope to keep improving on this in the year to come," he added.

Mr Sim said listenership has more than doubled from about 50,000 in the first half of 2018, and is expected to grow at least 30 per cent year on year for the next three to five years.

leilal@sph.com.sg

Hang Seng



Shanghai Comp



Nikkei 225



Dow Jones



BullsAndBears

Cautious day of trading for Asian markets

Investors take stock of US-China trade talks, Brexit decision, Fed meet, China data

Navin Sregantan

Asian markets kicked off the week with a day of cautious trading as investors braced themselves for a busy week, with key events such as US-China trade talks, the Brexit “B” plan decision and the Federal Reserve’s policy meeting on the cards.

Weak Chinese industrial profit figures released yesterday also weighed on Asian markets.

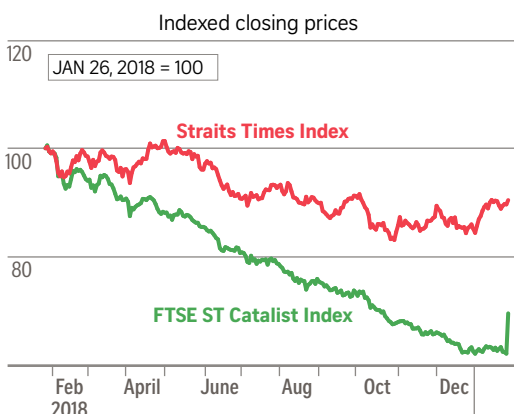
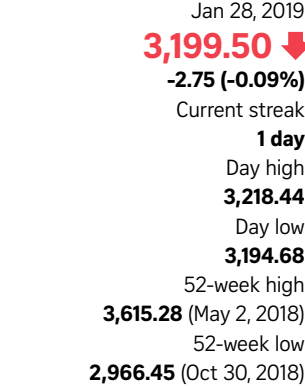
Singapore’s benchmark Straits Times Index (STI) spent much of yesterday’s trading session in the black before ending the day down 2.75 points or 0.1 per cent to 3,199.50.

CMC market strategist Margaret Yang said: “The resumption of the US Federal government on Friday after a one-month shutdown catalysed a mild rebound in Asian equities yesterday morning, but positive sentiment quickly faded away as scepticism surrounding upcoming trade talks took control over investors’ mind.”

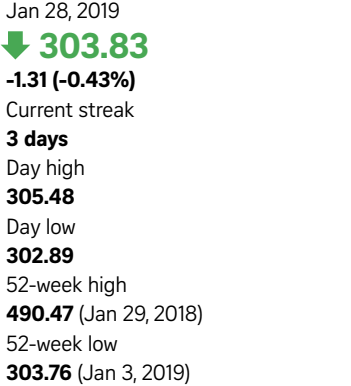
Ten of the 30 STI constituents ended the day in the red. Turnover on the bourse stood at roughly 1.32 billion securities worth \$822.8 million, or an average unit price of \$0.62 per security. Decliners outnumbered advancers 198 to 163.

Oil and gas firm Rex International, which announced a deal to divest its interests in two Norwe-

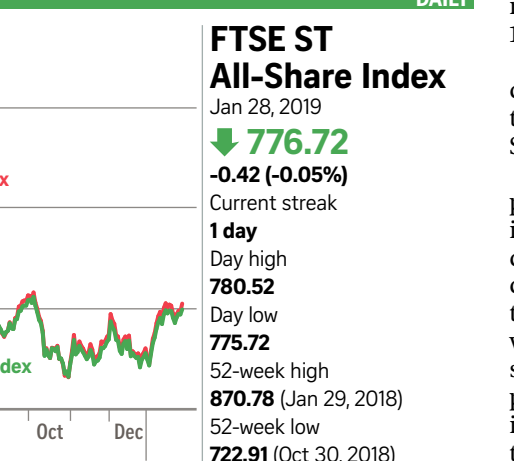
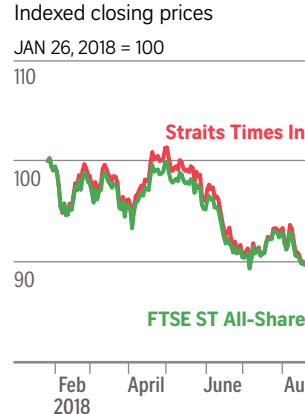
Straits Times Index



FTSE ST Catalyst Index



FTSE ST All-Share Index



gian assets through its 90 per cent-owned subsidiary Lime Petroleum was the most actively traded stock.

The counter added \$0.013 or 16.1 per cent to \$0.094 with 168.8 million shares changing hands.

Other actively traded stocks included Imperium Crown and

Spackman Entertainment.

Much attention was on Catalyst-listed Y Ventures as analysts at DBS Equity Research cut their earnings estimates for the e-commerce firm. They have suspended coverage on the stock as accounting errors surfaced from its latest financial state-

ments. The stock closed \$0.019 or 15.8 per cent down at \$0.101.

Against the backdrop of geopolitical uncertainties, defensive counters were the best performers on Singapore’s blue-chip index.

Gaming stalwart Genting Singapore was the biggest gainer on the index in percentage terms, with the counter adding \$0.02 or 1.9 per cent to close at \$1.08. With a turnover of 23.9 million shares, it was also the most active index stock of the day. Food and beverage player ThaiBev also fared well, closing 1.4 per cent higher at \$0.75 on a turnover of 17.4 million shares.

Elsewhere in Asia, markets in Japan, mainland China, South Korea and Malaysia ended the day lower while Hong Kong notched a modest gain. Japan’s Nikkei 225 saw the biggest shift, dropping 124.56 points, or 0.6 per cent, to close at 20,649.00.

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Lufthansa opens first overseas innovation hub in S’pore

Lufthansa Innovation Hub (LIH), the digitalisation and innovation unit of the German airline, launched its first foreign office in Singapore yesterday.

LIH Singapore will focus on market developments in the digitalisation of travel and establish a network of strategic partners here.

It has concluded a research partnership with the business school Insead on the future of work and transformation of business travel.

The key findings will be published in a white paper and implemented in a test project with Lufthansa.

Separately, LIH is working with co-working space provider WeWork on joint research projects.

The findings from the research partnerships will be tested under real-world conditions, Lufthansa said.

It is in discussions with Changi Airport Group and Munich Airport on this front.

LIH was started in 2014 in Berlin.

It will be expanding to Shanghai later this year.

“More than ever, Asian start-ups, but also digital enterprises, are the driving force behind fundamental changes along the travel chain,” said Mr Christian Langer, managing director of LIH, in a media statement.

“With the expansion of LIH, we want to become a serious part of this emerging ecosystem,” he said.

Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
286	245	Ascendas Reit	272	+1	8820	5.9	1.3
193	161	CapitaCom Trust	191cd	+1	17980	4.6	1
388	298	CapitaLand	330	unch	4259	3.6	0.7
238	195	CapitaMall Trust	238cd	+2	12397	4.8	1.2
1359	780	CityDev	109	+3	1286	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	228	-5	7973	4.6	1.9
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2422	unch	2492	5.9	14
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US\$39	-9	278	2.2	1
139	85.5	Genting Sing	108	+2	23942	3.2	1.7
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	27	unch	7594	3	0.7
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US\$25.5	unch	8325	10.3	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US\$706	-1	1883	2.8	0.3
6974	1099	JMH USD	US\$580	-21	230	2.4	0.7
4080	3155	JSH USD	US\$3704	-80	83	0.9	0.4
4062	2766	Jardine C&C	3700	-26	165	3.1	1.8
892	567	Keppel Corp	614cd	-6	3817	4.9	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1152	+5	3327	3.2	1.2
569	455	SATS	486	+1	544	3.7	3.4
830	672	SGX	760cd	+3	1827	3.9	9.5
1184	914	SIA	975	+3	662	4.1	0.8
292	231	SPH	102	unch	911	5.4	1.1
371	319	ST Engineering	368	unch	3819	4.1	5.4
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	261	-3	2531	1.9	0.7
362	283	Singtel	303	-2	10332	6.8	1.7
6974	1099	ThaiBev	174cd	+1	17404	0.8	3.7
3037	2380	UOB	2583	-5	1285	3.9	1.2
930	591	UOL	667	+1	667	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1589	+8	1323	3.8	2
332	297	Wilmar Intl	330	+2	4194	3	1
164	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	137	+2	10044	3.3	1

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
286	245	Ascendas Reit	272	+1	8820	5.9	1.3
127	105	Ascott Reit	117	+1	2250	6.1	1
77	59	Bumitama Agri	72.5	+1	175	1	1.7
185	143	CDL HT Trust	158	+1	993	1	1.1
193	161	CapitaCom Trust	191cd	+1	17980	4.6	1
388	298	CapitaLand	330	unch	4259	3.6	0.7
238	195	CapitaMall Trust	238cd	+2	12397	4.8	1.2
169	133	CapitaChina Tr	143	+1	1995	7.1	0.9
1359	780	CityDev	109	+3	1286	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	228	-5	7973	4.6	1.9
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2422	unch	2492	5.9	14
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US\$39	-9	278	2.2	1
78	59	Far East HTrust	63	+0.5	1358	0.7	0.7
197	150	First Resources	172	-2	887	4	2.2
233	211	Fraser's Cpt Tr	228xd	-1	982	5.3	109.6
116	101	Fraser's L&I Tr	107	+1	4340	6.4	1.2
139	85.5	Genting Sing	108	+2	23942	3.2	1.7
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	27	unch	7594	3	0.7
230	167	Guocoland Ltd	185	-1	124	3.8	0.5
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US\$25.5	unch	8325	10.3	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US\$706	-1	1883	2.8	0.3
6974	1099	JMH USD	US\$580	-21	230	2.4	0.7
4080	3155	JSH USD	US\$3704	-80	83	0.9	0.4
4062	2766	Jardine C&C	3700	-26	165	3.1	1.8
58.5	44.5	Kep Infra Tr	52cd	unch	3620	7.2	1.9
892	567	Keppel Corp	614cd	-6	3817	4.9	1
130	108	Keppel Reit	117xd	-1	4604	4.8	0.8
215	151	MI	206	unch	1042	5.5	3.9
273	170	Man Oriental USD	US191	-2	101	1.6	1.4
180	152	Mapletree Com Tr	178cd	+1	9652	5.1	1.2
212	184	Mapletree Ind Tr	204cd	+1	3413	5.8	1.4
140	118	Mapletree Log Tr	137xd	-2	13760	5.6	1.2
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr	126cd	+2	21002	6	0.9
83.5	73	NetLink NBN Tr	77.5	unch	5064	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1152	+5	3327	3.2	1.2
215	136	OUE	151	+4	467	2	0.3
92.5	64.5	OUE HTrust	69.5	+0.5	1797	-	0.9
250	157	Olam Intl	186	+4	1118	4	1
59.6	28	Oxley	29.5	+0.5	7748	5.1	0.8
306	256	ParkwayLife Reit	279	+5	964	4.8	1.6
121	98	Raffles Medical	112	unch	760	2	2.6
569	455	SATS	486	+1	544	3.7	3.4
830	672	SGX	760cd	+3	1827	3.9	9.5
1184	914	SIA	975	+3	662	4.1	0.8
337	220	SIA Engineering	250	-3	338	5.2	1.9
292	231	Singtel	303	-2	10332	6.8	1.7
106	98	SPHREIT	102	unch	911	5.4	1.1
371	319	ST Engineering	368	unch	3819	4.1	5.4
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	261	-3	2531	1.9	0.7
281	149	Sembcorp Marine	160	-3	6371	1.3	1.4
58	39	Silverlake Axis	40.5	-0.5	986	7.4	5.9
147	88.5	SingPost	98.5	+1.5	8853	3.6	1.3
362	283	Singtel	303	-2	10332	6.8	1.7
298	158	StarHub	180	-2	963	8.9	5.5
78	63.5	StarhillGbl Reit	72	+0.5	512	6.3	0.8
217	163	Suntec Reit	193cd	unch	5975	5.2	0.9
94	57.5	ThaiBev	75cd	+1	17404	0.8	3.7
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical	7.6	+0.1	5867	-	2.8
3037	2380	UOB	2583	-5	1285	3.9	1.2
930	591	UOL	667	+1	667	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1589	+8	1323	3.8	2
332	297	Wilmar Intl	330	+2	4194	3	1
243	183	Wing Tai	203	unch	485	3.9	0.5
164	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	137	+2	10044	3.3	1
190	116	Yanlord Land	128	-2	2027	5.3	0.5

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	137	-1	123	7.5	1
70	48	Accordia Golf Tr	54.5	unch	241	7.1	0.6
90.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	83.5	+0.5	1401	-	0.8
119	99	Ascendas-tTrust	109	-1	492	5.6	1.3
58.5	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	13	unch	3679	50	0.2
64	48	Banyan Tree	58.5	-0.5	155	1.7	0.8
281	115	Best World	268	unch	759	15	9.6
85.5	76	Boustead	79	-0.5	110	3.8	1.2
126	79.5	BreadTalk	87.5	-1.5	217	8	2.3
657	521	Bukit Sembawang	565	+1	22	3.2	1.2
88	65.5	Cache Log Trust	74cd	-1	2368	9.8	1.1
54	39.5	Centurion	41	unch	6	6.1	0.7
167	104	China Aviation	114	-1	812	3.9	1
47.5	29.5	China Everbright	35.5	unch	106	14	0.7
165	90.5	China Sunshine	125	-2	555	2.4	1.4
104	64	Chip Eng Seng	70	+0.5	550	5.7	0.6
53.5	31.5	Cosco	35	-0.5	3810	-	1.5
700	302	Delong	598	-1	10	-	0.6
28	17.5	Duty Free Intl	20cd	unch	42	9.3	1.3
79	67.5	EC World Reit	72	unch	161	8.4	0.8
59.5	47	ESR-REIT	52xd	+0.5	2435	7.4	1.1
142	92	First Reit	108	+4	2329	8	1.1
149	134	Fraser's Com Tr	146xd	+3	3155	6.6	0.9
82	66.5	Fraser's HTrust	72.5	+1	640	-	0.9
27	16.4	Geo Energy Res	19.8	+0.1	882	5.1	1.2
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	79	-0.5	57	2.9	2.4
68	52	Health Mgt Intl	55	unch	0	0.6	5.3
279	73	Hi-P Intl	89.5	-1.5	4091	27.9	1.4
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	262	-1	52	5	0.6
82.5	71	I-REIT Global	74	unch	135	8	1
41	18.3	Indofood Agri	22.5	+0.5	1700	-	0.3
82	49	Japfa	82	+1	3343	0.6	1.5
82	49	KSH	52	unch	108	4.2	0.9

M1 posted 1.96 million mobile customers at the end of the fourth quarter last year, down 4.1 per cent compared with the same period the year before, on a drop in prepaid card users.
ST FILE PHOTO

21.4%

Fall in telco M1's net profit for the three months to Dec 31, 2018, compared with the previous year's Q4 results.

M1's net profit falls to \$25.2m in fourth quarter

Revenue up 3.7% to \$312.8m on handset and equipment sales, but bottom line eroded by rising costs

Telco M1, which is facing a general offer by Keppel Corp and Singapore Press Holdings (SPH), saw earnings slide in the fourth quarter on higher expenses, according to unaudited financial results released yesterday.

Net profit fell to \$25.2 million for the three months to Dec 31 last year, down 21.4 per cent compared with the same period the previous year, even as operating revenue edged higher by 3.7 per cent to \$312.8 million, supported by handset and equipment sales.

M1 attributed the damage to the

bottom line to higher customer acquisition and retention costs, a rise in staff numbers as the corporate business expanded, and higher repair and maintenance expenses.

Handset and equipment sales, which made up about two-fifths of turnover, grew by 13.3 per cent year on year to \$125 million on higher sales volume and the consolidation of a newly acquired subsidiary.

M1 completed its acquisition of information technology device and service provider AsiaPac Distribution – a deal that could cost up to \$20 million in cash – on Nov 20 last year.

Still, service revenue fell 1.8 per cent to \$187.8 million, weighed down by the mobile telecommunications services segment.

M1, which includes the figures of mobile virtual network operator

partner Circles.Life, reported it had 1.96 million mobile customers at the end of the quarter, down 4.1 per cent compared with the same period the year before, on a drop in prepaid card users.

Average revenues per user were down across the board for the quarter in the mobile services segment, for post-paid, prepaid, data plan and fibre broadband customers.

Contributions from the fixed services business, on the other hand, rose 8.6 per cent to \$36.7 million on a bigger fibre broadband customer base and income from corporate projects.

Earnings per share was 2.7 Singapore cents, against 3.5 Singapore cents the year before, while net asset value rose to 56.3 Singapore cents a share, from 53.4 Singapore

cents previously.

For the 12 months, M1's net profit fell by 6 per cent to \$130.7 million, while revenue rose by 4 per cent to \$1.09 billion.

The board has recommended a final dividend of six Singapore cents a share, down from 6.2 Singapore cents the year prior. This would bring the full year's payout to 11.2 Singapore cents a share.

While M1 noted that the performance was in line with its half-year prospect statement, it did not give a detailed outlook statement as the voluntary general offer is still under way.

Connectivity, a joint venture between Keppel Corp and SPH, launched a buyout bid in September last year at \$2.06 a share, a price that values the telco at some \$1.91 billion.

The offeror, which has stated that it will not raise the offer price, controlled M1 shares representing 34.41 per cent of the company as at Jan 21.

It had received valid acceptances for shares amounting to a 1.12 per cent stake, including acceptances from concert parties, from the opening of the offer until then.

M1 closed flat at \$2.06 yesterday before the results were released.



CompanyBriefs

Oxley Holdings

Oxley Holdings' wholly-owned subsidiary, Oxley Docklands Quay Three Limited, and National Asset North Quays DAC have agreed to sell 268 residential units in Ireland to Greystar Europe Holdings for €175.5 million (\$271 million). The units are part of Blocks B and E of Dublin Landings, a mixed-use development situated along Dublin's North Wall Quay. The sale also includes external common areas and 210 car parking spaces.

Greystar, a London-based property operator, has been granted an exclusivity period till March 4 to conduct due diligence on the property and process papers related to the deal. Sale completion is targeted for Feb 27.

Great Eastern

Insurer Great Eastern has entered into a share and purchase agreement to divest a minority stake in Indonesia insurance firm QBE Indonesia for some US\$1.4 million (\$1.9 million). The buyer, PT Suryasono Sentosa, will receive a 5 per cent stake in QBE Indonesia following the transaction, which is subject to approval by Indonesia's financial services authority, Otoritas Jasa Keuangan, and the Monetary Authority of Singapore.

The move comes after Great Eastern said on Dec 11 it would sell a minority stake in QBE Indonesia, after acquiring it to satisfy Indonesian shareholding requirements.

Great Eastern, majority owned by Singapore lender OCBC, had said it would buy QBE Indonesia for US\$28 million as part of a strategy to build its general insurance operations and deepen its footprint in Indonesia.

Keppel Corp

Keppel Corp is selling a 70 per cent interest in a Vietnam township project to Nam Long Investment Corp for 2.3 trillion Vietnamese dong (\$135 million) in cash. Keppel Land, its real estate arm, is in the process of taking over complete control of Dong Nai Waterfront City LLC from its joint venture partner through a demerger. It will retain a 30 per cent stake after the sale of the 70 per cent stake to Nam Long.

Dong Nai Waterfront City has been granted the right to develop a township on 170 ha of land in Dong Nai province. It also holds 28 ha of land that is excluded from the proposed divestment.

The deal is conditional upon conditions precedent being fulfilled, like the completion of the demerger and regulatory approval. The consideration will be paid in tranches. The unaudited net asset value attributable to the sale stake was about \$57 million as at Dec 31, 2018.

SPH appoints chief of advertising partnerships and market development

Media company Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) has appointed a new chief of advertising partnerships and market development.

Ms Linda Lim starts work at SPH on Feb 1.

She will help deepen and widen longstanding relationships with media agencies, and strike up new ones with other players such as content producers, influencers and other potential resellers, said SPH chief marketing officer Ignatius Low.

Ms Lim will also look at how the company can anchor relationships with clients beyond straight media buys, and partner them to build a local ecosystem of products, platforms and marketplaces to meet their adaptive marketing needs.

She will also take charge of international sales and the outdoor advertising business, looking at how the portfolio can be reshaped and expanded



Ms Linda Lim's job will include building ties with industry players like content producers.

to better fit into SPH's overall media solutions proposition.

Ms Lim has more than 12 years of experience with media owners and media buyers. She was formerly with media investment company Group M Singapore, where she was chief investment officer and head of trading for more than five years.

In that role, she grew relationships with key media owners and other partners at a strategic level, creating better value across Group M from existing buy-sell transactions, and offering new strategies

that extended the typical publisher-agency relationship.

She also spent eight years at StarHub as head of sales, driving integrated campaigns across the telco's various media platforms.

Ms Lim will report to Mr Low and work closely with chief of advertising sales Goh Wee Wang, with a 160-strong sales team.

Mr Low said: "At SPH, we understand that the strongest client relationships must go beyond traditional buy-sell transactions, and the Singapore market today is ready for wider and more strategic conversations about value exchange and value-based relationships. So, the best marketing solutions will require collaboration not just within SPH departments but also with external partners, and even competitors."

Sue-Ann Tan

Interbank currency rates

Currencies	Against US\$		Jan 28	
	Bid	Offer	Bid	Offer
US\$/US\$ to one unit of foreign currency:				
Australian dollar	0.9723	0.9728	0.7183	0.7184
Canadian dollar	1.0234	1.0241	0.7563	0.7561
Euro	1.5430	1.5442	1.1399	1.1404
NZ dollar	0.9272	0.9277	0.6850	0.6851
Sterling pound	1.7813	1.7827	1.3160	1.3165
US dollar	1.3536	1.3541	-	-
US\$/US\$ to 100 units of foreign currency:				
Chinese renminbi	20.0846	20.0974	14.8379	14.8419
Danish kroner	20.6653	20.6793	15.2669	15.2716
Hong Kong dollar	17.25	17.26	12.7449	12.7450
Indian Rupee	190	190	14.049	14.051
Indonesian rupiah	0.0096	0.0096	0.0071	0.0071
Japanese yen	12370	12378	0.9138	0.9141
Korean won	0.1209	0.1211	0.0893	0.0895
Malaysian ringgit	32.90	32.95	24.3072	24.3309
New Taiwan dollar	4.3955	4.3973	3.2475	3.2474
Norwegian krone	15.8607	15.8721	11.7174	11.7215
Philippine peso	25.753	25.773	1.9026	1.9033
Saudi riyal	36.0902	36.1064	26.6624	26.6645
Swedish krona	14.9338	14.9443	11.0327	11.0363
Swiss franc	136.2593	136.3234	100.6644	100.6745
Thai Baht	4.2917	4.2974	3.1706	3.1736

MSCI INDICES

Jan 25	In local curr		Change
	Index	%dy	
World Preliminary	1528.5	0.9	6.0
EAFE Preliminary	1057.4	0.6	4.9
Europe Preliminary	1471.8	0.5	4.8
Australia	1187.9	0.7	4.1
Austria Preliminary	543.2	2.9	9.1
Belgium Preliminary	994.8	0.5	8.7
Canada Preliminary	1969.8	0.6	7.6
Denmark Preliminary	7618.5	-1.1	2.9
Finland Preliminary	721.6	1.4	10.5
France Preliminary	1786.0	1.1	4.2
Germany Preliminary	907.4	1.4	7.5
Greece Preliminary	46.5	0.2	7.1
India	1257.0	-0.7	-0.5
Indonesia	7445.6	0.3	5.2
Ireland Preliminary	189.1	0.2	5.5
Israel Preliminary	251.1	0.5	8.9
Italy Preliminary	669.8	1.1	7.7
Japan	938.9	0.9	5.1
Korea	653.2	2.0	8.1
Malaysia	590.0	0.5	1.4
Netherlands Preliminary	1553.6	1.2	6.6
New Zealand	138.5	-0.4	4.4
Norway Preliminary	2899.0	-0.5	4.1
Pakistan	410.0	-0.1	14.9
Philippines	1370.6	0.0	8.6
Portugal Preliminary	84.5	0.8	4.6
Singapore	1668.5	0.4	4.6
Singapore Free	358.7	0.4	4.6

Government securities

GOVERNMENT BONDS		Jan 28				
Period	Issue code	Coupon rate (%)	Maturity	Close Bid	High	Day's Low
2-Year	NY05100N	3.250%	01-Sep-20	101.90	101.92	101.91
5-Year	NX13100H	2.750%	01-Jul-23	102.80	0.00	0.00
10-Year	NX18100A	2.625%	01-May-28	103.44	103.60	103.55
15-Year	NZ13100V	3.375%	01-Sep-33	110.77	0.00	0.00
20-Year	NZ16100X	2.250%	01-Aug-36	95.78	95.85	95.50
30-Year	NA16100H	2.750%	01-Mar-46	101.57	101.80	101.80

Note: Based on latest issue

Source: Monetary Authority of Singapore

Human Capital Partnership - Singapore Press Holdings Forum

Employee engagement in today's landscape:

Strategies to Attract and Retain Talent



Gain valuable insights into employee engagement and human capital development.

Don't miss the full coverage of this forum in The Straits Times and The Business Times tomorrow.

Organisers:

THE STRAITS TIMES

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HUMAN CAPITAL PARTNERSHIP

With Deepest Condolences to
Mr Oei Hong Leong & Family
on the demise of their beloved father



Eka Tjipta Widjaja
on 26 January 2019

From:

Simon Cheong

Edmund Cheng

Tony Chew

Bobby Chin

Chua Thian Poh

Chandra Das

Lee Boon Yang

Lim Cheok Peng

Low Teck Seng

Ngoi Sing Shang

Eugene Sim

Henry Tay

Ida & Nicky Tan

Tan Tee How

Tan See Leng

SPORT

No. 1

NAOMI OSAKA'S TOP RANKING IS HER NEW CHALLENGE, SAYS ROHIT BRIJNATH C8

OON TO LEAVE SPORTS HUB

CEO to step down after HSBC Rugby 7s; announcement stuns local sports fraternity

David Lee

The Singapore Sports Hub is searching for its fourth chief executive officer (CEO) in just over three years following the sudden resignation of Oon Jin Teik yesterday.

The 55-year-old former national swimmer's departure was announced in a press statement at 9.58pm last night and comes just over a year after he was appointed to the job. He will relinquish the reins after the April 13-14 HSBC Singapore Rugby Sevens.

Bryn Jones, the Hub's chairman, will take over as acting CEO until its "global search" for a replacement bears fruit.

"The board extends its heartfelt appreciation to Jin Teik for his strong leadership, passion and unwavering commitment to the project and wishes him the very best in his future endeavours," Jones said in the statement.

No reason was given for Oon's sudden resignation and he could not be reached for further comment but The Straits Times understands that there was a disagreement between him and the board on the direction of the Sports Hub.

In the same statement, he said: "I have been privileged to be involved with the Singapore Sports Hub for almost 20 years (since its conceptualisation phase)... They have given me full support throughout my tenure and together with Sports Hub's internal and external partners, we have accomplished a lot.

"I am very proud of this national icon, the Singapore Sports Hub, and I wish the staff, board and management team the very best for the future."

The announcement sent shockwaves throughout the local sports fraternity as Oon had attended a Lunar New Year luncheon hosted by the Sports Hub at the National Stadium just last Saturday. Eight weeks ago, he had also helmed a presentation of the Hub's plans for the year to local media.

In a statement, national sports agency Sport Singapore (SportSG) voiced its concern "over the resignation of the CEO, and the impact that this would have on Singapore Sports Hub's operations".



Oon Jin Teik was named the chief executive officer of the Singapore Sports Hub in January last year. Yesterday's announcement that he will step down from his role after the April 13-14 HSBC Singapore Rugby Sevens shocked the sporting fraternity. ST FILE PHOTO

"Sport Singapore has sought clarification from the chairman of Singapore Sports Hub on their plans to address this and have emphasised that we will continue to hold them accountable for the delivery of a first-class and vibrant sports, entertainment and lifestyle hub for Singaporeans," added the statement.

Koh Ching Ching, head of group brand and communications at OCBC, a key stakeholder at the Hub where it holds the naming rights to several facilities such as the OCBC Aquatic Centre and OCBC Arena, added: "We are surprised by Jin Teik's departure. Since Jin Teik took the helm at the Singapore Sports Hub, the partnership between us has strengthened with mutual respect and understanding.

"Activities at the Singapore Sports Hub have also increased significantly. We see stronger commu-

nity engagement and buzz, which is something OCBC desires. We will miss working with Jin Teik and wish him all the very best."

Oon was the CEO of SportSG's predecessor, the Singapore Sports Council, from 2004 to 2010, and a senior executive at Hyflux from 2011 to 2014.

He joined the Sports Hub in May 2014 as the chief operating officer, and was the acting CEO after Manu Sawhney quit abruptly in May 2017.

In January last year, he was the first local-born to be named CEO of the \$1.33 billion facility.

Then, he had promised to engage all Singaporeans, saying: "Our goal is to give everybody in the heartland something new to experience in the Sports Hub through a diverse portfolio of programming."

Last year, the Sports Hub hosted more than 210 events and wel-

comed more than three million visitors.

During his tenure as both COO and CEO, the facility staged the 2015 SEA Games and Asean Para Games, the 2016 National Day Parade and Fina World Junior Swimming Championships, HSBC Singapore Rugby Sevens, International Champions Cup, One Championship bouts, WTA Finals and concerts by Coldplay, Madonna and BTS.

He has also been involved in its joint bid with SportSG and the Singapore Tourism Board to host the season-ending ATP Finals from 2021. Singapore is one of the five shortlisted cities vying to host the prestigious year-end in men's tennis.

Last February, the Sports Hub also signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding with the

Football Association of Singapore (FAS) to make the National Stadium the "Home of the Lions".

FAS general secretary Yazeen Buhari also paid tribute to Oon, saying: "Jin Teik had always shared our common vision when it comes to football programming at the Hub. He understands the needs of the game here in Singapore and the key role the Hub plays as a strategic partner of the FAS.

"The FAS and I wish him all the best in his future endeavours and we hope to still see him involved in sports in one way or another."

This is not the first time the Hub, which began operations in 2014, has been shaken by the departure of a senior office holder. ST understands that its COO Wong Lup Wai and chief financial officer Sandy Tay had also resigned recently.

During Sawhney's tenure, it was

also hit by a spate of resignations of senior management and staff.

In response to ST's queries, a Sports Hub spokesman would only say that "in the normal course of business for all organisations... a certain level of attrition is to be expected".

It declined further comment on staff movement, noting that this is "in line with our policy not to comment on such confidential matters".

It added in a statement: "Our focus is to ensure business continues as usual at the Singapore Sports Hub. We have a strong team in place and we remain fully focused on pursuing operational excellence, executing a vibrant repertoire of events, and delivering great experiences for our clients, colleagues, partners and patrons."

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Singapore to host SB20 World Championships

Singapore will host a sailing world championships for the first time, after One15 Marina Sentosa Cove Singapore announced yesterday that it has secured the hosting rights for the SB20 World Championships 2021.

The marina will host more than 70 boats and teams from around the world from Feb 2-6.

More than 15 teams from Singapore, comprising some of the Republic's top sailors, are also expected to participate in the regatta.

This will be the first SB20 World Championships to be held in Asia since its inception in 2008, while Europe and Australia have hosted it nine times and twice respectively.

Singapore SB20 Association fleet vice-captain Nicholas Cocks said One15's successful hosting of four SB20 Asia Pacific Championships between 2015 and 2019 - this year's event was held last week -

was a key factor in winning the bid to host the 2021 world event.

Noting that the "tripartite alliance" of his organisation, One15 Marina and the Singapore Sailing Federation (SSF) have put in a "very convincing bid", Cocks added: "Sailing has become increasingly popular in Singapore and playing host to a world championship event will definitely give the profile of the sport a boost locally and around the region."

Conceptualised in 1999 as a one-design class of sailboat, the SB20 is an open keelboat designed for racing with a crew of three or four, whose maximum weight must not exceed 270kg.

Being the largest one-design keelboat fleet in Singapore, the SB20 is the boat of choice for Singapore sailors progressing from dinghy racing to keelboat racing.

One15 Marina general manager Teo Joo Leng was "very excited" about the successful bid, and said:



One15 Marina Sentosa Cove Singapore will host more than 70 boats and teams during the SB20 World Championships 2021. ST PHOTO: SEAH KWANG PENG

"This successful bid would not have been possible without the strong support and advocacy efforts of our partners - the Singapore SB20 Association, the Singapore Sailing Federation as well as the Singapore Tourism Board.

"Over the years, One15 Marina Sentosa Cove Singapore has consistently supported the sea sports community as part of our corporate mission to make it part of the lifestyle offerings at the marina."

While the SB20 is not an Olympic class, SSF president Lincoln Chee felt Singapore's hosting of the SB20 World Championships 2021

will help sailing grow on multiple fronts.

He said: "Our local sailors will get to race against foreign sailors of an international standard and, if we can host it well, that will give confidence to the management, federation and the sailing community at large, and raise interest here.

"Any experience hosting a world championship will be great. We will also host the Asian Laser Championship in March and are always looking (to host a world championship in an Olympic class)."

David Lee

Double points for Super League Triathlon finale

Xener Gill

Super League Triathlon (SLT) women's leader Katie Zaferes may have a 17-point lead over fellow American Kirsten Kasper coming into the season finale in Singapore, but victory in the series is still far from certain for the 2016 Olympian.

The Singapore event, to be held from Feb 23-24 at the One15 Marina Sentosa Cove Singapore, will offer competitors double the points for their finishes.

This means that Kasper can win the crown if she wins her races in Singapore, while Zaferes finishes fourth or lower.

In the men's category, Frenchman Vincent Luis is leading the race with the maximum 75 points - from winning the previous three legs in Jersey, Malta and Mallorca - but his challenger, South African Henri Schoeman, is still in the running for the top spot with 63 points.

The overall winner for each leg claims 25 points, followed by 21 points and 18 points for the second- and third-placed finishers.

The Singapore event will feature triathletes from 18 countries, including three local teams, representing Sport Singapore (SportSG), who will participate in the Team Enduro event on Feb 24.

Two teams will feature Singapore athletes, including two-time Olympian and Asian Games swimming gold medalist Tao Li, netball captain Charmaine Soh and members of the national water polo, floorball and cricket teams.

The final team will consist of youths who are active volunteers in SportSG's SportCares community.

There will also be a youth event where young Asian triathletes, aged between 17 and 19, will compete in an Enduro format race on Feb 24. The junior athletes will compete in the same course as the professional athletes but with modified distances.

Singaporeans Luke Chua, 18, and Emma Middleditch, 17 - who represented Singapore at the Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires last year - will be participating in the youth event.

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CARDIFF HOPE FOR A 'HAPPY ENDING'

**Distraught team still pray missing striker
Sala can be found as they take on Arsenal**

LONDON • Cardiff City players have yet to come to terms with the disappearance of £15 million (\$26.7 million) club-record signing Emiliano Sala, a week after the striker's plane went missing over the English Channel.

Despite the Argentinian never getting the opportunity to make his debut for the Premier League club – he had been pencilled in to start at Arsenal today – the 28-year-old is still considered “part of the team” and defender Sol Bamba told Sky Sports the squad had been “hurt and affected by it (the tragedy)”.

He said: “If you're human, you're going to be hurt by it. If you've got a heart, you're going to be affected.

“Even if he wasn't fully part of us, from the minute he signed for us and came to see the boys to say hello, he was part of us.

“We have to hope because we haven't found his body yet, even if the chances are very slim, but we like to think there can be a happy ending, hopefully. It was a tough week... Everyone was in shock.”

While conceding the awful circumstances were far from ideal preparations for their trip to the Emirates, with last Tuesday's train-

ing session called off, the Ivorian claimed the team “were going to do the best we can”.

Cardiff manager Neil Warnock echoed the same thoughts of finding Sala alive, even though a minute's silence will be held before all league games this week in honour of the player and David Ibbotson, the plane's pilot.

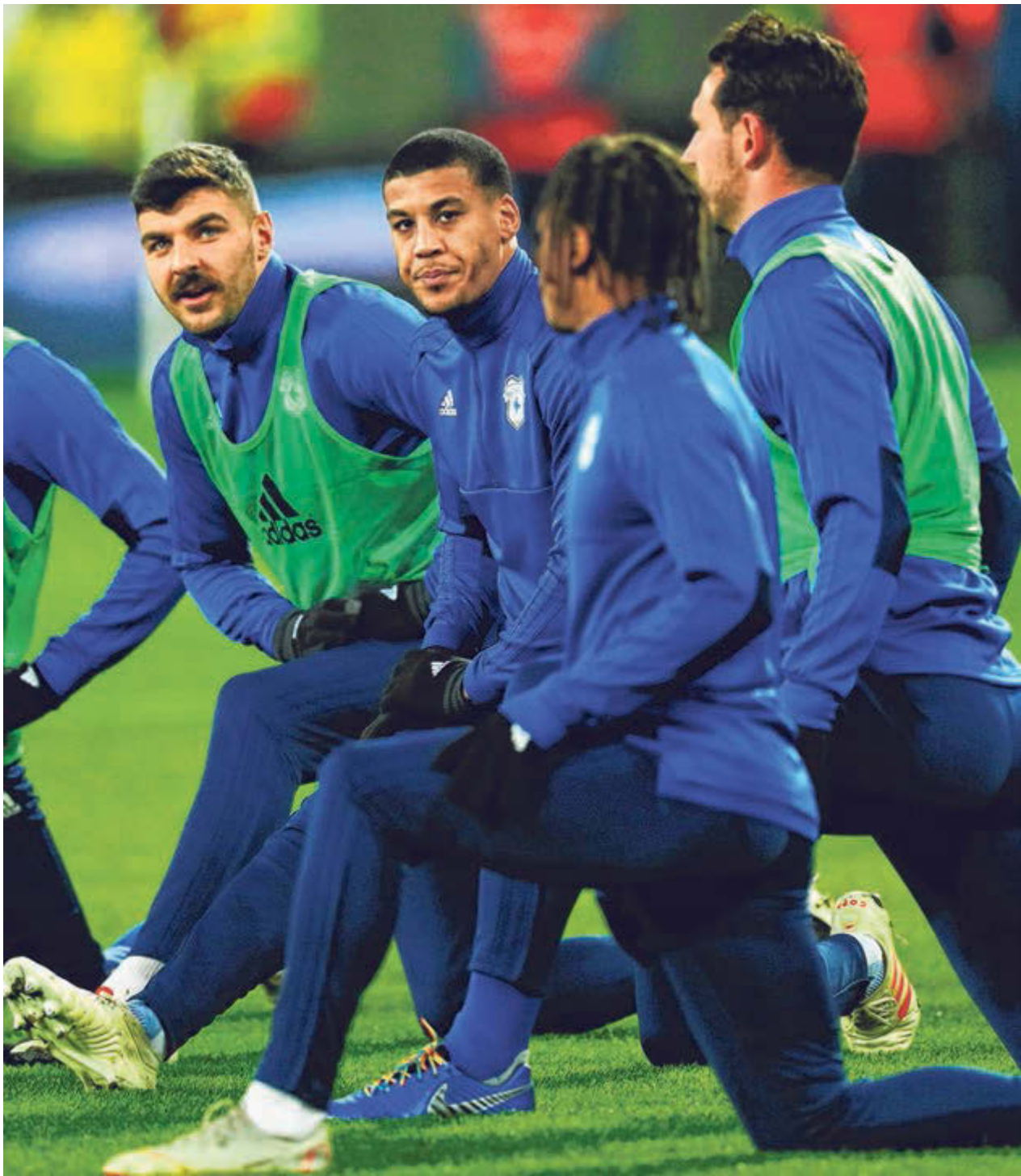
The Bluebirds boss admitted at his pre-match press conference that it had been “the most difficult week in my career by a mile” but said “the players need some sort of distraction”.

He added: “I can't get my head around the situation, when I look at (Sala's sister) Romina and the family. Everybody is hoping (to find Sala) like the family.

“I've met the lad and know how he was looking forward to this (playing in England). I've never experienced anything like it... It's been a sombre mood. It's just as well we have a game tomorrow.”

Arsenal manager Unai Emery will also be wary of the “knock-on (effect) with the (Cardiff) players”, even though Warnock will again be forced to field Callum Paterson, a converted right-back, up front.

The Gunners have conceded 32



ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1 Liverpool	23	19	3	1	54	13	60
2 Man City	23	18	2	3	62	17	56
3 Tottenham	23	17	0	6	48	23	51
4 Chelsea	23	14	5	4	40	19	47
5 Arsenal	23	13	5	5	48	32	44
6 Man United	23	13	5	5	46	33	44
7 Watford	23	9	6	8	32	32	33
8 Wolves	23	9	5	9	27	31	32
9 Leicester	23	9	4	10	29	29	31
10 West Ham	23	9	4	10	30	34	31
11 Everton	23	8	6	9	34	33	30
12 Bournemouth	23	9	3	11	33	42	30
13 Brighton	23	7	5	11	25	32	26
14 Crystal Palace	23	6	4	13	23	32	22
15 Southampton	23	5	7	11	25	40	22
16 Burnley	23	6	4	13	23	43	22
17 Newcastle	23	5	6	12	19	31	21
18 Cardiff	23	5	4	14	19	44	19
19 Fulham	23	3	5	15	21	51	14
20 Huddersfield	23	2	5	16	13	40	11

From left: Cardiff's Callum Paterson and Lee Peltier will play on today against Arsenal under the cloud of new signing Emiliano Sala's disappearance, even though the team are still recovering from shock.
PHOTO: REUTERS

City will not rest amid packed schedule

LONDON • Newcastle may be only two points above the relegation zone and are fighting for their Premier League survival, but Pep Guardiola has no intention of rotating his squad despite harder tests to come.

His Manchester City side, who are aiming to temporarily close the gap to leaders Liverpool to just one point, will have to deal with fixture congestion after their league trip to Everton was rescheduled to Feb 6.

The decision was taken following their progression to the League Cup final on Feb 24.

That visit to Goodison Park will be sandwiched between two home

games in the league – against Arsenal on Feb 3 and Chelsea on Feb 10.

However, Guardiola claimed ahead of today's game at Newcastle that it was “a privilege” that City were still in the hunt for an unprecedented quadruple – the only English club capable of achieving the fabled feat this season.

The Spaniard said: “We have a lot of games, so no way (we will be resting). It is what it is. If you believe it's a handicap, that's a big mistake.

“When you are 35 years old, you can have long holidays. No problem, you will be retired. But for now, take it, enjoy it. Next one, win again. Play good, prepare well.

“That's the only way. After, you work for next season.”

Guardiola also warned his side any complacency at St James' Park would be punished by Rafa Benitez's men as “no team is safe going there”. He added: “We will go (to Tyneside) first and then, it's time to think about Arsenal. Next game is the important one.”

Separately, Manchester United goalkeeper David de Gea also urged caution over growing optimism that the club are in the driver's seat to clinch a top-four place this term.

Their perfect record – eight wins in eight games – under caretaker manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has

“maybe two or three weeks”, Arsenal have only two fit centre-backs at the moment in Shkodran Mustafi and rookie Konstantinos Mavropanos for their “very important match against Cardiff”.

REUTERS

ARSENAL V CARDIFF

Singtel TV Ch104 & StarHub Ch229, tomorrow, 3.35am

brought renewed hope to the Old Trafford faithful, but de Gea felt the team, who are three points behind fourth-placed Chelsea, still had a “difficult” task.

Speaking ahead of their home game against Burnley, he told Sky Sports: “We're happy with the wins, but aren't satisfied with the overall situation. This is a club that should be fighting for the title.”

REUTERS

NEWCASTLE V MAN CITY

Singtel TV Ch102 & StarHub Ch227, tomorrow, 4am

MAN UNITED V BURNLEY

Ch103 & Ch228, tomorrow, 4am

Tottenham not ready to win titles: Pochettino

LONDON • Mauricio Pochettino has defended his record at Tottenham, arguing that silverware would serve only to “build egos” rather than maintain progress after seeing his team exit a second domestic cup competition in four days.

A Spurs side, sporting seven changes from the League Cup semi-final loss to Chelsea, were knocked out of the FA Cup on Sunday after a 2-0 loss Crystal Palace.

This leaves Pochettino's men with only two fronts to focus on – next month's Champions League last-16 tie against Borussia Dortmund and, realistically, a top-four finish in the Premier League.

Pochettino, who has yet to claim a trophy in his managerial career, admitted disappointment at the meek defeat but suggested trophies would not maintain Spurs' de-

velopment as a club.

The Argentinian said: “We are going to create a debate that to win a trophy is going to help the club.

“I don't agree with that. In reality, the most important thing is being consistently in the top four and playing in the Champions League.

“That is going to help the club to achieve the last step. The club is doing fantastically well. It's so successful. In the last four or five years, we've been fighting in different ways to achieve what the club needs, to be in the level of Chelsea, (Manchester) United, (Manchester) City, Arsenal or Liverpool.

“People wish we could win some trophies. But we are a team not built to win titles still.”

Wounded by fatigue and injuries to key players, Spurs should at least have Son Heung-min, back early af-



Tottenham defender Kieran Trippier is disappointed after wasting a goalscoring chance against Crystal Palace in their 2-0 FA Cup fourth-round loss on Sunday.
PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ter South Korea's surprise elimination from the Asian Cup, available for tomorrow's league game against Watford at Wembley.

Pochettino said: “To be a contender is always difficult for us.

“Now, the realistic targets are trying to be in the top four, to try and be close to City and Liverpool and

reduce the gap.

“Another is to try to beat Dortmund and be in the next round.

“That will be tough. We are competing against a team who are doing fantastic in Germany, who are top of the table and have come back off their (winter break) holidays.”

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

BASKETBALL

ABL Wolf Warriors v Alab Pilipinas (StarHub Ch202, 8pm).

FOOTBALL

Asian Cup S-final: Qatar v UAE (Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208, 9.50pm).

English Premier League

Newcastle v Man City (Singtel Ch102 & StarHub Ch227), Man United v Burnley (Ch103 & Ch228) – tomorrow, 4am. Arsenal v Cardiff (Ch104 & Ch229), Fulham v Brighton (Ch105 & Ch230), Huddersfield v Everton (Ch106 & Ch231), Wolves v West Ham (Ch107 & Ch232) – tomorrow, 3.35am.

TOMORROW

BASKETBALL

ABL Hong Kong Eastern v Saigon Heat (StarHub Ch201), CLS Knights v Westports Malaysia Dragons (Ch202) – 8pm.

FOOTBALL

English Premier League Liverpool v

Leicester (Singtel TV Ch102 & StarHub Ch227), Tottenham v Watford (Ch104 & Ch229) – Thursday, 4am. Bournemouth v Chelsea (Ch103 & Ch228), Southampton v Palace (Ch105 & Ch230) – Thursday, 3.35am.

For latest updates, go to singtel.tv.com.sg & starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.

LOTTERY

TOTO

Mon, 28 Jan 2019

Draw No. 3444/2019

Group 1 Prize \$2,941,606

Winning Numbers

06 11 19 33 35 38 45

Add. No.

45

Prize Group	Share Amount	No. of Winning Shares
Group 1	\$2,941,606	1
Group 2	\$61,904	6
Group 3	\$1,443	177
Group 4	\$358	390
Group 5	\$50	9,395
Group 6	\$25	10,104
Group 7	\$10	161,235

Group 1 prize and total share amount for Group 1 may differ due to rounding.

Next Draw Fri, 1 Feb 2019, 9.30pm

Draw No. 3445/2019

Group 1 Prize \$5,000,000 est.

Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 210 Middle Road, #01-01, Singapore 188994

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS				
Event	Home	Away	Timing	Venue
Tue, 29 Jan 2019				
Asian Cup	Qatar	UAE	10.00pm	LW*
Wed, 30 Jan 2019				
English Premier	Huddersfield	Everton	3.45am	LW*
English Premier	Arsenal	Cardiff	3.45am	LW*
English Premier	Fulham	Brighton	3.45am	LW*
English Premier	Newcastle	Manchester City	4.00am	LW*
English Premier	Manchester Utd	Burnley	4.00am	LW*
French League Cup	Guingamp	Monaco	4.05am	LW*

LW* : Telecast not available at Livewire (Singapore Pools)
Visit singaporepools.com for the latest 'Live' telecast listing.

Wishing You a
Happy Lunar New Year

Outlet Operating Hours & Draw Times
during Lunar New Year period

Eve of Lunar New Year
Outlets open till 4pm.

Mon, 4 Feb 2019
TOTO draw as usual.

1st day of Lunar New Year
Outlets will be closed.

Tue, 5 Feb 2019

2nd day of Lunar New Year
Usual operating hours will resume for outlets.

Wed, 6 Feb 2019
SINGAPORE SWEEP draw as usual.

Normal operating hours for all Livewire venues throughout the Lunar New Year period except Livewire (Singapore Pools Building) which is open till 4pm on Eve of Lunar New Year, Mon, 4 Feb 2019 and 1pm - 6pm on Tue, 5 Feb 2019. Timing may vary across outlets.

Cheque payment

For prize amounts above \$5,000, please visit Singapore Pools Main Branch (210 Middle Road) for cheque collection. Note:

- Lunar New Year Eve (Mon, 4 Feb 2019): Close at 4pm
- First Day (Tue, 5 Feb 2019) and Second Day (Wed, 6 Feb 2019) of Lunar New Year: Close
- Third Day of Lunar Year (Thu, 7 Feb 2019): Open as usual

Due to the Lunar New Year period, longer than usual waiting time is expected. Thank you for your understanding.

No person under the age of 18 years shall be allowed to purchase a ticket or to claim any prize.
LW: Livewire (MBS) & Livewire (RWS) (21 years and above)
Livewire (Singapore Pools) (21 years and above during 'Live' telecast)
SB: SportsBuzz@Living (21 years and above)
Singapore Pools Account Service. Call 6796 6666 for more details.

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RCB Reg No.: 196020203

SPORT

ROSE SHOWS WHY HE'S WORLD NO. 1

Englishman overcomes shaky start to clinch 10th PGA Tour victory; Woods tied for 20th

SAN DIEGO • To be the best, you have to beat the best. That was what Justin Rose did over four days to win the Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines, protecting his status as the world's top-ranked golfer. After a shaky start on Sunday

that included three bogeys over his first five holes, he recovered to shoot a three-under 69, beating Adam Scott by two shots. He conquered a field that featured 12 of the top-20 players to record his 10th PGA Tour victory, passing Nick Faldo for the most

PGA Tour wins by a player from England in the modern era. The 38-year-old finished with a 72-hole total of 21-under 267, a tournament record since the South Course was redesigned in 2003 and one shot off the overall record of 22 under shared by Tiger Woods (1999) and George Burns (1987). Australian Scott closed out with a 68, finishing at 19 under, while Hideki Matsuyama of Japan (67) and American Talor Gooch (68)

were tied for third at 16 under. "Twenty-one under par at Torrey Pines is great golf," Rose said, dedicating the win to his caddie, Mark Fulcher, who is hospitalised but doing well after having heart surgery last week. "This one's for him." Scott claimed his closing surge was "too late" because Rose had built a four-shot lead and birdied two of the final four holes himself. He added: "Justin performed like the No. 1 player should today. When he was shaky, he bounced back nicely. He showed why he's the No. 1 player in the world." Although Rose's three-shot lead at the start of the day was trimmed to one after he made bogeys on Nos. 1, 4 and 5, he played bogey-free the rest of the day while making five more birdies. "I never lost the lead, so I had to stay patient," he said. "I scratched a line on my scorecard after the sixth hole and said, 'We build a round from this point on.'" In his first event of the season,

Woods was never a factor. His week-long putting woes continued on his first nine, but rediscovered his stroke with five birdies over his final eight holes to shoot 67, finishing in a tie for 20th at 10 under. He shot all four rounds under par at Torrey Pines for the first time since 2008, and it was his first sub-70 round here since 2013, the year of his most recent of seven titles in the event. "It was nice to shake off some rust," the former world No. 1 said. "The whole week was good, very positive. I wasn't as sharp as I wanted to be but, each and every day, it got a little better. "I was hitting my putts on my lines, I just wasn't reading them right. I burned a lot of lips and made my share today, which was nice." Woods' next event will be the Feb 14-17 Genesis Open at Riviera Country Club, where his charitable foundation is the primary beneficiary. NYTIMES



England's Justin Rose celebrating his winning putt at Torrey Pines to clinch a two-shot win over Australian Adam Scott at the Farmers Insurance Open on Sunday. The 38-year-old finished with a total of 21-under 267, a tournament record since the South Course was redesigned in 2003. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Sun threatens to sue over 'false' doping report

BEIJING • Chinese swimming star Sun Yang threatened legal action against a British newspaper on Sunday over claims that he faced a lifetime ban after allegedly clashing with anti-doping testers and smashing a vial of blood with a hammer. The 27-year-old, who has won Olympic gold medals in the 200m, 400m and 1,500m freestyle and is also a multiple world champion, strongly refuted the accusations published in The Sunday Times. The daily alleged that a confrontation took place and Sun – who was banned for three months in 2014

for taking a stimulant – missed an out-of-competition test on Sept 4 at his home in Zhejiang province. "A clash with anti-doping testers ended in him and his security guard using a hammer to smash a vial containing his blood," it reported. After the story broke, Sun's lawyer Zhang Qihuai issued a statement via Xinhua saying The Times had "a malign intention" and "severely damaged Sun Yang's reputation and violated his privacy." "We reserve the right to file a lawsuit against the relevant international media," he said.



Sun Yang has rejected claims in The Times that he clashed with anti-doping testers.

Zhang stressed that a doping panel for Fina, swimming's world governing body, ruled in Sun's favour on Jan 3 and testers for the International Doping Tests & Management had breached some rules. Those included failing to pro-

duce authorisation letters, so he elected to reject the testing. The statement, which made no mention about the smashed blood vial, also read: "They fabricated an untruthful report claiming Sun Yang broke anti-doping rules." In a separate interview that was published by Xinhua on Sunday, Zhang said: "Sun is entitled to reject any invalid doping test and safeguard the reputation and integrity of Chinese athletes." But The Times noted that while Fina had cleared Sun, the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada) "has

demanded to know more about the extraordinary events". Sun is considered one of China's greatest athletes, but has courted controversy in the past, having previously engaged in a war of words with Australian Mack Horton. He received the backing on Sunday from the country's swimming association, which insisted he had cooperated fully with Fina. The China Swimming Association added: "The association will continue to strictly abide by anti-doping regulations." AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SportingLife

Osaka: The champion and the challenge



Rohit Brijnath
Assistant Sports Editor
In Melbourne

Number 1 is a position, a prize and a predicament. You earn it, then you have to wear it. In the mirror you see the same person but the world sees someone else. You are a human, an athlete and now also an ideal. You are the tennis standard and a poster on a wall. Little girls are saying they want to be you. Mothers approve.

Are you ready? Smile, please. The long education and adventure of Naomi Osaka was already under way, but if the US Open was fame then this is stardom. Life is accelerating like her forehand. This is hand-shaking, talking, greeting, this is signing, smiling, answering, this is everyone wanting to know everything about who she is. This is also occasionally going to be a pain. We can't know who Osaka is because she is 21 and barely knows herself. She is growing up but will do so in camera. The legendary Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar, whose worship ventured into hysteria, realised every time he closed his front door that he now belonged to India. Number 1 is cool, it's a charm and yet it's a job. It's fortunate that Osaka has a smile that could charm

Medusa. In the old days, best in the world was worth a brag and a beer but now it's a responsibility. The game is a show. Her tennis should be enough of an advertisement of who she is but in a modern world the sport itself is never enough. We're not satisfied with the music of topspin and slices and the poetry of courage and comebacks. On court, there's music, light shows and the random singing of a national anthem. Off court, there are cameras in corridors which record every nose-pick and show the world every private tear. Are these athletes or actors in an all-day drama? Sport has no sense of proportion and Osaka is about to understand that. Is there anywhere else where you get paid A\$4.1 million (\$\$4 million) for two weeks' work

Number 1 is hard because you must rise even as your peers want to hold you down. They'll shake your pedestal, rattle it, chip away at it. The chosen always becomes the chased.

at 21? Is there anywhere else where you're anointed a leader at 21 and now your sport looks to you and the world at you? Osaka's clear, innocent admission that public speaking was not her favourite thing was lovely

and yet people lean in when she answers. As if now, like on court, she's supposed to know so many answers. Everyone wants to know The World According To Naomi. Time will be her biggest enemy because it will start to get stolen in pieces. Ten minutes for a sponsor, 15 for a clinic, 20 for a fan interaction, an hour for a fashion shoot and, wait, a president is calling. Time eats into practice, into rest, and it's practice and rest which make champions, but the best learn in time. Brilliance is born of balance. And also of a team that surrounds her, protects her, directs her, which allows her to be silly and tells her when she's foolish. Osaka must know she cannot be all things that everyone, and every culture she represents, wants her to be. Number 1 is hard because you must rise even as your peers want to hold you down. They'll shake your pedestal, rattle it, chip away at it. The chosen always becomes the chased. Osaka has to play better because she's going to force everyone to be better. "I know No. 1 is very difficult," she

said, "because people expect you to win all the time and you always have really hard matches because everyone wants to beat you." Two Slams, three, four, 20, it doesn't matter what the count is, every week you still have something to prove. For some it's a burden, for some like Novak Djokovic it seems like an intoxication. To be challenged for him is a high. Famous folk love to say they haven't changed, but everyone does, and is supposed to, but perhaps they mean fame hasn't brought a thick coating of conceit. Roger Federer is a fine example, an athlete of abnormal gifts who has stayed a man of normal bearing. He is a fine model for young athletes and Osaka can borrow a little from him, but she is much younger, hero to another generation, speaker of a different language, player of her own game, leader of her own pack. So, go then, champion, enjoy your world, even as you conquer it. Just don't forget to smile.

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SportsWorld

S'pore junior paddlers come up trumps in HK

Singapore junior table tennis players Jayden Tan, Yang Ze Yi and Nathaniel Chua flew the Republic's flag high when they won the boys' U-12 team event at the Asia Youth Table Tennis Invitational Tournament in Hong Kong on Sunday. Their teammates Joel Ng, Daniel Zang and Wayne Chua finished eight. Jayden and Daniel Zang also finished third in the boys' U-12 singles and the U-11 singles events respectively.

Japan break Iranian resolve, seal final spot

AL AIN • Japan reached the Asian Cup final yesterday after a 3-0 semi-final win over Iran. Goals scored by Yuya Osako (two) and Genki Haraguchi were the first conceded by the Carlos Queiroz-led Iran in the tournament. The Samurai Blue will face the victors of today's semi-final between Qatar or hosts United Arab Emirates, in the final on Friday. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Neymar may not be fit for Man United tie

PARIS • Paris Saint-Germain coach Thomas Tuchel admits it will be "very difficult" for Neymar to regain full fitness for their Champions League clash against Manchester United next month. The Brazil forward suffered a fractured metatarsal against Strasbourg in the French Cup last week, with the club confirming it was a recurrence of the injury that threatened his World Cup participation last year. PSG visit Old Trafford for the first leg of their last-16 clash on Feb 12 before hosting the return leg on March 6. REUTERS

Harden's star showing propels Rockets to win

LOS ANGELES • Chris Paul returned from injury, but it was James Harden's 40 points that fuelled the Houston Rockets' 103-98 come-from-behind victory over the Orlando Magic in the National Basketball Association (NBA) on Sunday. Harden extended his streak of games with at least 30 points to 23, while chipping in with 11 rebounds, six assists and three blocked shots – including one in the last 30 seconds to help the Rockets seal the win. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

life

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Thank you for the music

Singapore Symphony Orchestra's music director Shui Lan steps down after 22 years. He tells **Akshita Nanda** about his journey with the orchestra and his plans for the future. **D3**

DESIGN: LIM YONG PHOTO: SINGAPORE SYMPHONY GROUP

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Smooth as silk



PREFERRED CARD

Original leads return to iconic play

This year's restaging of *Off Centre*, which made its debut in 1993, sees Abdulattif Abdullah and Sakinah Dollah reprising their roles as people with mental illness



Akshita Nanda
Arts Correspondent

There is a sweet story at the heart of *Off Centre*, the iconic 1993 play about living with mental illness.

The original leads, Abdulattif Abdullah and Sakinah Dollah, met and married each other, thanks to the production created by The Necessary Stage.

Now, they reprise their roles as the depressive Vinod and schizophrenic Saloma in the Feb 7 to 17 restaging of the play at Victoria Theatre.

But playwright Hareesh Sharma and director Alvin Tan also point out a bitter truth – that the issues *Off Centre* raised about integrating those with mental-health issues into mainstream society have yet to be fully addressed.

“There is more support now, but the discrimination and stigma remain the same. People find it difficult to find a job,” says Tan.

The play is an O-level English

literature text for those taking examinations this year and in 2020. This year's staging also includes actors Brendon Fernandez, Nicholas Bloodworth, Ellison Tan, Fareez Najid, Sindhura Kalidas and Joshua Lim, as well as Aidli Mosbit and Najib Soiman (both cast in the 2007 restaging of *Off Centre*).

“Last time, the production was minimal. Now, we can afford to have a proper crowd for some of the scenes,” says director Tan, wryly referring to the fact that the 1993 staging of *Off Centre* lost a \$30,000 grant from its original commissioner, the Ministry of Health, because the script was deemed unacceptable.

Officials were concerned about the play presenting “a prejudiced view of mental disorder, its treatability and the therapists, besides ridiculing God, religion and national service”, according to a statement released in 1993 by the then Ministry of Information and the Arts.

Official disapproval was a huge emotional and financial blow for

the young theatre group.

“We were rehearsing and crying,” Sharma recalls. “Then on opening night, people queued to meet Saloma (who ends the play).”

The public reception to *Off Centre* was overwhelmingly positive. Critics praised the play for its maturity and sensitivity, while the then-director of the Counselling and Care Centre wrote in a letter to *The Straits Times*: “I wish this play could be staged again to reach out to a wider audience. It is one of the best plays I have watched in the last few years of theatre in Singapore.”

In 1994, a shortened version of *Off Centre* was restaged for the first Mental Health Awareness Week, organised by the Singapore Association for Mental Health and the National Council of Social Service.

In 2006, *Off Centre* became the first Singaporean play to be studied as an O- and N-level text. (The Necessary Stage restaged the play in 2007, with Melvinder Kanth and Misliana Mustaffa in the lead roles.)

Abdulattif, 51, who is also known

as Lattif and is an educator in a local secondary school, became a minor celebrity with literature students. “Even before I spoke to them, they asked: ‘Was that you, Mr Lattif?’”

He and 47-year-old Sakinah are both educators – she heads a kindergarten. They have four children aged 12 to 24 and left the theatre world when their first child was born.

Invited to The Necessary Stage's 30th-anniversary celebrations last year, they asked whether it might be possible to re-create the magic of 26 years ago.

The answer was a resounding yes. As director Tan says: “They co-created the characters. It was very difficult for me to restage *Off Centre* – it was hard to get over them.”

To create the characters of Vinod and Saloma, Sharma interviewed residents of halfway houses and the former Woodbridge Hospital. Lattif and Sakinah met several sufferers as well, and had to shop and open a bank account in character.

For this restaging, both went in

character to McDonald's – and people stared and murmured their discomfort.

As an educator, Lattif has seen students struggle with depression and mental-health issues. He says: “Mental illness is actually quite normal, but we continue to be not sufficiently educated about what kind of support is needed.”

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BOOK IT / OFF CENTRE

WHERE: Victoria Theatre, 9 Empress Place
WHEN: Feb 7 to 17, 8pm (Wednesdays to Fridays); 3 and 8pm (Saturdays); 3pm (Sundays)
ADMISSION: \$45 and \$36 from Sistic (call 6348-5555 or go to www.sistic.com.sg)

Written by playwright Hareesh Sharma and directed by Alvin Tan (both foreground), *Off Centre* will star Sakinah Dollah and Abdulattif Abdullah (both background), who married each other after the 1993 production.
ST PHOTO: JONATHAN CHOO

Identity in artefacts

REVIEW / THEATRE

CATAMITE (R18)
Loo Zihan/M1 Singapore Fringe Festival Black Box, Centre 42/Last Friday

Akshita Nanda

Traditional theatre delivers a narrative to the audience.

In *Catamite*, each member of the audience co-creates his or her own narrative with multi-disciplinary artist Loo Zihan (right), in a lecture-performance that plays out much like a theory of knowledge class conducted by a quirky teacher.

The work, which ended its run on Sunday, sees Loo employ similar methods to those used in *I Am LGB*, an interactive performance for the 2016 Singapore International Festival of Arts, which he developed with other artists under the collective *The LGB Society Of Mind*.

I Am LGB had participants carrying out seemingly useless and quirky tasks to symbolise the hyper-competitive school system in Singapore, and also point out the restrictions of this system versus the freedom provided by the once-proscribed genre of performance art.

Catamite, too, is much like a lecture or class in that participants get what they are willing to put into the experience. Loo guides around 20 people at a time, asking them to reflect on what their possessions say about identity. From telling stories about a chosen object – keys, a pair of headphones or, in this reviewer's case, a book from a bookstore that closed down years ago – participants are led to consider the veracity and impact of artefacts and stories that are handed down from the past.

The work is meant to stimulate individual introspection, rather than plead any particular cause, even though *Catamite* introduces the first criminal case of homosexuality tried in Singapore, and takes its title from an old-fashioned term for a young,



male homosexual lover. The word is no longer in common usage and this work for the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival explores temporality and the temporary nature of things.

Catamite is an extension of Loo's 2016 installation, *Queer Objects: An Archive For The Future*, in which objects ranging from glowsticks to perfume bottles were arranged to depict the contents of a time capsule unearthed in a future where gay sex is no longer a crime in Singapore.

He feels the installation was overshadowed by the controversy over the removal of two sex objects from the collection – rather than considering the archive as a whole, people discussed the absent objects.

By getting audiences to create a temporary archive of their own objects, Loo creates a new kind of “queer archive”. Archives are considered permanent records, but this one is defined by its short-lived nature.

Among the still extant artefacts considered in *Catamite* is the impact of British colonial rule on Singapore.

Volunteers enact the separate trials of a British officer and a Malay man for homosexuality, held just before the outbreak of World War II, and it becomes clear that ethnicity affected the severity of the judgments handed out. The Malay man was immediately convicted, the British officer granted the benefit of the doubt.

What other forms of bigotry linger in legal systems and attitudes today? The two-hour time is too short for the audience to fully explore this question, leaving this reviewer with a vague sense of dissatisfaction and curiosity – which is probably what Loo intended all along.

Slick play takes on weighty issues

REVIEW / THEATRE

ANGKAT: A DEFINITIVE, ALTERNATIVE, RECLAIMED NARRATIVE OF A NATIVE
Nabilah Said & Noor Effendy Ibrahim/M1 Singapore Fringe Festival 2019 Studio Theatre, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts/Last Saturday

Akshita Nanda

This slick and funny production by playwright-producer Nabilah Said and director Noor Effendy Ibrahim makes a deep point by staying sharply superficial.

On the surface, *Angkat: A Definitive, Alternative, Reclaimed Narrative Of A Native* is about a young Singaporean woman named Salma (Shafiqhah Efandi) competing in a national singing contest.

Salma was born to British parents, but considers herself Malay since she is an “anak angkat” or adopted child brought up by Mak (Moli Mohter), a Malay woman.

Salma speaks Malay with a pronounced accent – which does not extend to her singing voice – and the rest of the cast constantly comment on her non-Asian features.

Looking deeper, Salma is Singapore, a blend of East and West and undeniably uncomfortable with aspects of her heritage.

Singapore's historical role as one of the states of Malaysia becomes a contentious point later in the play, when a song written during this period is reworded by organisers to edit out any mention of the past.

Excellent acting by a cast which includes Adib Kosnan, Hafidz Abdul Rahman and Izzul Irfan, this



Angkat: A Definitive, Alternative, Reclaimed Narrative Of A Native's cast includes (from left) Adib Kosnan, Moli Mohter, Hafidz Abdul Rahman and Izzul Irfan. PHOTO: MONOSPECTRUM PHOTOGRAPHY

play by Nabilah has been three years in the making.

Teater Ekamatra was originally supposed to stage her script, but the work was not deemed ready by production time in December 2017.

Instead, that year, director Irfan Kasban created a narrative based on her concept, which focused on the confusion of a biracial woman who is told at times to emphasise her Malay identity and at others to deny it, in order to win a singing contest.

Angkat: A Definitive, Alternative, Reclaimed Narrative Of A Native instead considers the stories that are included and excluded in Singapore's national narrative.

The reality television format extends to much of the staging.

Characters break the fourth wall and many of Mak's reminiscences are mediated through a television screen as well.

Viewers are led to consider just how stories, even those seemingly based on facts, are constructed, presented and consumed.

Apart from the tendency to gloss

over Singapore's past history, the play touches on the disconnect between Singapore's island nature and the lifestyle of today.

The production design has islands of light or green in colour surrounding an urban mainland, symbolised by a dining table and TV set.

The cast members propel a bottomless boat around the stage with their feet, but at certain points in the play, characters are jettisoned from the narrative.

They reappear as ghosts on the surrounding islands, but their voices are always at the edge of hearing, rather than part of the main action.

Even Salma's mother begins the play by recalling her life as an island-dweller off the mainland coast, but as the action continues, her voice becomes less important.

Her frustrating silence makes a point about overlooked histories, but this would have been even sharper if the production had lived up to its title and reclaimed her story.

GOODBYE, FOR NOW



Shui Lan does not rule out returning to the Singapore Symphony Orchestra as a guest conductor but, for now, the SSO will need time away from him to evolve



Akshita Nanda
Arts Correspondent

Chinese-American conductor Shui Lan took up the baton by accident.

He started playing the violin at age five and wanted to be a violinist, but a football injury to his hand at 18 meant he could not practise the instrument for a long time.

"Every violin teacher told me: 'Don't play football, you will hurt your hand,' but I didn't care," said the 61-year-old.

He studied conducting and composition instead, so the injury turned out to be a happy accident that led to 22 years as music director of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO). He put down his baton after two farewell concerts last Friday and Saturday.

"I've to try not to be too emotional," Shui told The Straits Times in his dressing room, just before conducting the orchestra last Friday, in one of his final appearances as music director – a 90-minute performance of Mahler's Second Symphony at the Esplanade Concert Hall. "Not only the occasion, but even the symphony itself is so emotional."

Also known as the Resurrection Symphony, Mahler's Second takes musicians and listeners through movements of quiet solemnity and

despair, but ends with a climactic choral call to eternal life. It is often played by orchestras to mark significant events and Shui chose it specifically to both mourn an ending and to celebrate a new beginning.

He said: "It is close to my heart, because it is truly the end of an era – for me as well as the orchestra. It also beckons at what's next – which I'm convinced will be a fantastic future for the SSO."

Shui announced his retirement from the SSO in January 2017, saying he wanted more time with his family, notably his three-year-old son Yan with homemaker wife Lin Lin, and his 13-year-old son Matthias, from a previous marriage.

He is tired of long overseas stints away from them. "As conductors or soloists, we have to make a choice, either family or work," he said. "I had to make the decision."

While Europe-based Singaporean conductor Choo Hoyey was the founding music director of the SSO and is credited with laying the foundations of a national orchestra, which debuted in 1979, Hangzhou-born Shui is widely acknowledged to have moulded it from an ensemble of irregular quality to a world-class institution.

It has attracted world-renowned guest artists, such as Chinese-American cellist Yo-Yo Ma and Russia-born conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy, and has been well-received in various countries over the years.

A review of the SSO published in the American Record Guide said Shui has "turned a good regional orchestra into a world-class ensemble".

Shui's journey with the SSO started in 1993 when he was first invited to conduct the orchestra. At the time, he was associate conductor at the Detroit Symphony Orchestra with the Estonia-born maestro Neeme Jarvi.

He took over as music director in January 1997.

It was an eventful year – that summer, he nearly became a vegetable after a cycling accident in Colorado, and awoke in the hospital fighting to remember the notes of Mahler's First Symphony.

Alongside getting back on his feet after the accident, he had to get the SSO onto its feet. At that time, the orchestra had "not gained the confidence of the audience" and needed more fine-tuning as an ensemble. "My priority was how to raise the orchestra's standard. Local audiences still did not trust the product," he said. People in Singapore would rather listen to "any foreign orchestra" than the national ensemble.

Shui re-auditioned the musicians – four were cut for failing to meet expectations and two were told their contracts would not be renewed – and instituted regular reviews.

He also pulled out all the stops to convince guest artists to come play with the orchestra. "When a guest artist comes in, the orchestra gets inspired and the local audience too," he said.

Some of his friends, such as cellist Ma, were easily brought in to work with the orchestra – Ma's first concert with the SSO was in September 1999 – but others, like fellow Chinese-American artist Bright Sheng, had to be persuaded.

In 1997, Sheng worried whether the SSO was capable enough to handle the Asian premiere of his 25-minute-long composition China Dream, but his fears were allayed after sitting in on a rehearsal.

Under Shui's leadership, the orchestra has gained renown beyond Singapore's shores.

The new conductor will have his own ideas of how to build an orchestra. I think the old conductor can give the new conductor time and space.



CHINESE-AMERICAN CONDUCTOR
SHUI LAN

It was hailed as possibly "one of the great orchestras of the 21st century" by the London Spectator after a 2010 performance at London's Royal Festival Hall and its televised BBC Proms debut in 2014 received four out of five stars in The Guardian and The Telegraph.

Some critics say Shui has focused too much on works from the late Romantic period and the SSO is often less comfortable with other repertoire, but Shui said that the SSO "plays everything", including contemporary works.

The orchestra's first recording under his baton for music label BIS was a first complete cycle of Russian composer Alexander Tchaikovsky's symphonies. A 2007 album, Seascapes, put Debussy's La Mer with Chinese-American composer Zhou Long's The Deep, Deep Sea in a combination that BBC Music Magazine called "outstandingly successful".

The same could be applied to the SSO's reach since Shui came on board. It attracts more than 80,000 listeners and performs 120 concerts every season. The free open-air concerts at the Botanic Gardens attract up to 8,000 people at a time.

If not conducting, Shui, now a Singapore permanent resident, loves to be in the audience for such outdoor concerts. "I've gone many times as the audience. This is the best – people just enjoying the music, not sitting stiffly in the concert hall, covering their mouths if they cough."

Last Saturday, he was named the SSO's conductor laureate for his 22 years of service. It is an honorary title with no advisory role, but he does not rule out returning as a guest conductor.

However, he emphasises that the SSO needs time away from him to evolve. Instead of a music director, the orchestra is appointing a new head of artistic planning and is auditioning new conductors.

"The new conductor will have his own ideas of how to build an orchestra. I think the old conductor can give the new conductor time and space," he said.

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Shui Lan through the years



Shui Lan was born in Hangzhou in 1957 to a banker and a doctor and started learning the violin at age five. At age 13, he moved to Beijing to join the People's Liberation Army Song and Dance Troupe, a school for musical talent that enjoyed the protection of Mao Zedong. He trained in conducting and composition at the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music and became conductor of the Beijing Symphony Orchestra in 1985.



In 1986, Shui received a scholarship to study at Boston University's Tanglewood Institute, where he trained with the late American composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein.



Shui (above, at his inaugural concert) took over as the Singapore Symphony Orchestra's music director in January 1997.



A portrait of Shui that appeared in SSO's 1997 calendar.



Shui with cellist Yo-Yo Ma in 2004, the year SSO toured the United States, giving concerts with renowned soloists such as Ma.



Shui with American-Israeli violinist Gil Shaham at the Prague Spring Festival in Smetana Hall, Prague, in 2016. PHOTOS: COURTESY OF SHUI LAN, IVAN MALY, SINGAPORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, ST FILE



SCAN TO WATCH
Shui Lan bows out after 22 years
<http://str.sg/lanshui>

History, fiction and poetry to mark Singapore's bicentenary

Kicking off the year are a host of new books, by the likes of Professor Tommy Koh and writer Alfian Sa'at, as well as a literary exhibition

Olivia Ho

Singapore's bicentennial year is being met by a spectrum of new books that tackle Singapore's colonial past and what came before. They span genres – from broad histories to novels to poetry anthologies – as well as literary exhibitions.

Some, such as Asian Civilisations Museum director Kennie Ting's 1819: A Living Legacy, take a fresh look back at Singapore's history over the past 200 years.

"I think it is important to recognise that so much of who we are today as a nation and people is also shaped by our colonial heritage," says Mr Ting, 40, adding that he sees the bicentennial as a means of assimilating this heritage, "reverse-colonising" or "Singaporean-ising" our colonial heritage and making it our own".

Ambassador-at-large Tommy Koh and the British High Commissioner to Singapore Scott Wightman have edited a book of essays on Singapore and Britain's relationship over two centuries.

Professor Koh, 81, judges British rule of Singapore to have been "60 per cent good and 40 per cent bad" and intends the book to be a balanced, objective review.

"Over the past 200 years, the relationship between our two countries has evolved from a relationship between the ruler and the ruled, between a rich and a poor country and between a developed and a developing country into a relationship between two equals," he says.

Books such as Merdeka, a collection of writings edited by writer Alfian Sa'at, are meant as a critical response to the bicentennial and the question of colonialism.

Alfian, 41, says: "One of the central questions in the book is whether Singapore has ever undergone a process of decolonisation and how this process is understood.

"Does decolonisation end with gaining independence from the British? Is it possible to reduce colonialism to a balance sheet, where we weigh its pros – administrative bureaucracy, rule of law – against its cons – demographic change, loss of sovereignty, resource extraction, slavery?"

"And how do we engage with terms such as the anti-colonial, the post-colonial and the neo-colonial in Singapore today?"

The bicentennial has also drawn views from elsewhere, with British-born American travel writer Pico Iyer weighing in through an upcoming book about Raffles Hotel.

Iyer, 61, sees the hotel as an emblem of the city. "As someone who was born and raised in England, the son of children of British India, I have been fascinated to see the city find its own voice, untether itself from the empire and establish



Asian Civilisations Museum director Kennie Ting's (above) book, 1819: A Living Legacy, takes a look back at Singapore's history over the past 200 years.

itself as a place that countries worldwide seek to learn from and emulate."

Literary reactions to the bicentennial are not confined to print. A March exhibition, Any Anything Also Can by local literary non-profit group Sing Lit Station, will showcase eight poems across Singapore history in multiple languages, from a 1893 Tamil travelogue to contemporary poems such as Pooja Nansi's Language and Martha Fernandez's My Kristang Awakening.

The poems will be transformed into broadsides by local graphic design studios Fellow and qu'est-ce que c'est and exhibited at The Arts House from March 1 to 17 during its annual Textures festival.

Poet Tse Hao Guang, 30, the exhibition's curator, says: "The poems were chosen because they feature, within each poem, evidence of plural languages. This reflects an approximation of – but ultimately, the impossibility of – the Chinese, Indian, Malay and Other model to describe Singapore's culture."

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• Follow Olivia Ho on Instagram @ohomatopoeia

MORE STORIES on D5

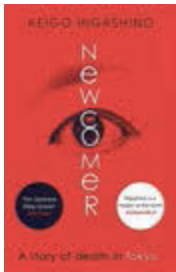


Ms Izyanti Asaari (far left) and Ms Iffah Dahiyah (left) from Fellow design studio and Mr Bryan Angelo Lim from qu'est-ce que c'est design studio will transform poems into broadsides for the exhibition, Any Anything Also Can, by literary non-profit group Sing Lit Station.

ST PHOTOS: CHONG JUN LIANG, JOSEPH CHUA

Review

Japanese sleuth solves crime by examining human nature



**FICTION
NEWCOMER**
By Keigo Higashino,
translated by
Giles Murray
Little, Brown/
Paperback/
342 pages/
\$29.95/
Books Kinokuniya
★★★★☆

Linette Lai

Who filled the ningyo-yaki cake with wasabi? And why can't Mr Yosaku Kishida make his wooden top spin?

These are the questions that detective Kyoichiro Kaga must answer to unravel the murder of 45-year-old Mineko Mitsui, who was killed in her Tokyo apartment block.

Kaga, a lowly precinct cop who has been transferred down from the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department, is the newcomer of the novel's title and a breath of fresh air in the stuffy Nihonbashi neighbourhood.

The archetypal eccentric detec-

tive, he ambles around the district in plainclothes asking seemingly trivial questions, each of which sheds a little more light on the central mystery of whodunnit.

As with celebrated literary sleuths such as Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, Higashino's Kaga knows that the key to solving the most heinous crimes lies in understanding human nature.

In Kaga's own words: "We have to sift through every little detail, asking ourselves why such and such a thing occurred."

"That will eventually lead us to the truth, even if all those individual things have no direct connection to one another."

Higashino is one of Japan's most celebrated and prolific mystery writers, with more than 50 novels and several short story collections under his belt.

Newcomer is one of several featuring Kaga and was first published in Japanese in 2001.

Its spare, clean and matter-of-fact prose is characteristic of many English translations of Japanese novels.

But translator Giles Murray has also chosen to make liberal use of several old-fashioned idiomatic expressions which throw the novel slightly off-kilter.

For example, Kaga asks a character at one point: "Shall we get down to brass tacks?"

In the same chapter, another char-

acter remarks: "Jolly good, jolly good. Say hi to the little bugger for me."

These phrases strike a discordant note in the harmony of Higashino's Tokyo neighbourhood, which is characterised by shops selling old-school Japanese rice crackers, wooden spinning tops and artisanal kitchen scissors.

But despite these missteps, Newcomer is still an intriguing, enjoyable read.

If you like this, read: The Devotion Of Suspect X by Keigo Higashino (Little, Brown, 2012, \$19.94, Books Kinokuniya), a best-selling thriller about what happens when divorcee Yasuko Hanaoka gets a visit from her former husband.

10 books to look out for in Singapore’s bicentennial year

1
200 YEARS OF SINGAPORE AND THE UNITED KINGDOM
Edited by Tommy Koh and Scott Wightman (both left, below)
Straits Times Press/Paperback/
340 pages/\$35/
Major bookstores



This collection of essays, edited by Singapore’s Ambassador-at-large Tommy Koh and British High Commissioner to Singapore Scott Wightman, examines the 200-year relationship between Singapore and Britain.

The collection’s authors include the likes of ISEAS- Yusof Ishak Institute writer-in-residence Irene Ng and former British High Commissioner to Singapore Alan Hunt, who write about the evolution of the two countries’ bilateral relationship from 1965 to this year.

Political scientist and historian Farish Noor and literary and cultural critic Nazry Bahrawi cover immigration, race relations and British prejudice against its Asian subjects, while pioneer civil servant J.Y. Pillay looks at how Singapore survived British withdrawal from its military bases.

2
SINGAPORE 1819: A LIVING LEGACY
By Kennie Ting
Talisman Publishing/
Hardcover/192 pages/\$27.10 before GST/Major bookstores



This is a wide-ranging retrospective on Singapore’s heritage. As an expert on port cities, Ting approaches it from that angle, exploring and presenting the global origins and context of as many aspects of heritage – including architecture, the arts and flora and fauna – as he can manage.

Readers will discover lesser-known facts such as how the portrait of Sir Stamford Raffles in the National Museum of Singapore is not about his relationship with Singapore, but rather with Java; or that the concept of an Esplanade has its roots in Victorian English seaside resorts such as Blackpool and Brighton.

3
TAN KIM SENG: A BIOGRAPHY
By Vivienne Tan
Landmark Books
Publishing next month

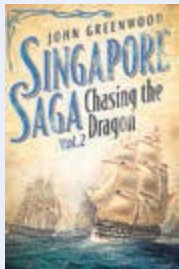


This is the first biography of the 19th-century entrepreneur who arrived in Nanyang in the 1820s and gave his name to the Tan Kim Seng Fountain, Kim Seng Road and Kim Seng Bridge.

It expands on colourful elements of his life, such as his pivotal role in quelling the Great Riot of 1854 when Hokkien and Teochew secret societies clashed and how he threw a ball so famous that it was reported in England in a journal published by Charles Dickens.

Its author Vivienne Tan is Tan Kim Seng’s great-great-great-granddaughter-in-law.

4
SINGAPORE SAGA VOL 2: CHASING THE DRAGON
By John D. Greenwood
Monsoon Books
Publishing in May



Greenwood, a Scottish professor formerly at the National University of Singapore, kicked off his ambitious Singapore Saga series of novels last year, a planned fictional charting of 100 years of Singapore’s history from 1819.

The first volume, Forbidden Hill, covered the early years of the British colony. The second, Chasing The Dragon, spans 1836 to 1854 and depicts Singapore’s expanding port against the background of the First Opium War and Taiping Rebellion in China.

5
SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS: A HISTORY OF SINGAPORE
By (left from top) Derek Heng, Kwa Chong Guan, Peter Borschberg and Tan Tai Yong
Marshall Cavendish/
Publishing end-May

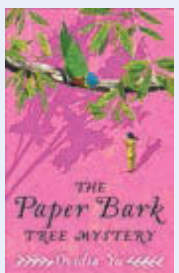


An official publication brought out by the National Library Board and Singapore Bicentennial Office, this is a revamp of a 2009 book, A 700-Year History: From Early Emporium To World City.

National University of Singapore Associate Professor Borschberg joins the original trio of historians who authored the first edition, adding his research from Dutch, Portuguese and French sources.

Other fresh content includes more in-depth analyses by Professor Heng, currently history chair at Northern Arizona University, of archaeological discoveries that piece together Singapore’s 14th-century beginnings.

6
THE PAPER BARK TREE MYSTERY
By Ovidia Yu
Constable
Publishing in June



Local literary veteran Yu rounds up her Crown Colony murder mystery trilogy. In 1937, teenage Peranakan sleuth Chen Su Lin loses her dream job at Singapore’s Detective Unit because the new colonial adviser thinks a “local girl” should not be involved in investigations and replaces her with a white woman.

When he is murdered and the father of Su Lin’s best friend becomes a suspect, she decides to do her own digging.

Yu tackles the shades of racism of the era and the spectrum of colonials, from the well-meaning to the exploitative.

7
CONTOUR: A LYRIC CARTOGRAPHY OF SINGAPORE
Edited by Michelle Heng, Leonard Ng, Tan Chee Lay, K. Kanagalatha and Azhar Ibrahim
Poetry Festival Singapore
Publishing in July



This commemorative anthology, expected to come out in

conjunction with the annual Poetry Festival Singapore, is gathering some 100 works in the four major languages that speak to the past 700 years of local history – from pre-1819 days to its colonial period and up to the modern day – in what the editors deem a “lyric cartography”, an attempt to “map the literary imagination of a people”.



8
THIS COULD BE HOME
By Pico Iyer (left)
Epigram Books
Publishing in August

Iyer, a British-born American travel writer, has been visiting Raffles Hotel for 35 years. The hotel approached him two years ago to be its first official writer-in-residence, although by the time he could take up the residency, it was closed for renovation.

While waiting for it to reopen, Iyer has been speaking to hotel staff and tracking its development. The book will look at Singapore’s imperial history and its urban future, with the hotel as an emblem of the city.



9
MERDEKA
Edited by Alfian Sa’at (left)
Ethos Books
Publishing in November

This collection, a response to colonialism, will be published in conjunction with a production of the same name by theatre company Wild Rice, in which some of the pieces from the book will be performed.

It combines existing pieces such as excerpts from 19th-century scholar Munsyi Abdullah’s memoir Hikayat Abdullah, with new contributions, such as young writer Faris Joraimi’s piece Bicentennial Bleaching: Statues And The Politics Of Commemoration, which refers to the recent bicentennial publicity activities surrounding the Raffles statue on the Singapore river.

10
SEVEN HUNDRED LINES: A CROWN OF FIFTY FOUND//FOUNT SONNETS
Edited by Desmond Kon
Zhicheng-Mingde
Squirrel Line Press
Publishing late this year

The anthology takes the form of an epic 700-line poem, comprising sonnets by 50 writers. These are to be “found//fount sonnets”, a form conceived by Kon.

The writer chooses a base text – a historical document, newspaper article, memoir excerpt or so on – picks a word as a starting point and then circles every seventh word from there until he or she has 14 words. Each must then be used in a line of the sonnet.

Olivia Ho

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE SINGAPORE BICENTENNIAL OFFICE, COURTESY OF ALFIAN SA’AT, COURTESY OF STRAITS TIMES PRESS, DEREK SHAPTON, LANDMARK BOOKS, LITTLE BROWN, MIEL, MONSOON BOOKS, STRAITS TIMES PRESS, ST FILE, TALISMAN PUBLISHING

Bestsellers

FICTION

1. (1) Crazy Rich Asians by Kevin Kwan
2. (4) The Travelling Cat Chronicles by Hiro Arikawa
3. (2) The Next Person You Meet In Heaven by Mitch Albom
4. (-) Love Looks Pretty On You by Lang Leav
5. (5) China Rich Girlfriend by Kevin Kwan
6. (-) Legends Of The Condor Heroes #1: A Hero Born by Jin Yong
7. (3) Rich People Problems by Kevin Kwan
7. (10) The Five People You Meet In Heaven by Mitch Albom
8. (9) Assassin’s Creed Odyssey by Gordon Doherty
9. (-) Sea Of Strangers by Lang Leav
10. (-) Killing Commendatore by Haruki Murakami

NON-FICTION

1. (1) Becoming by Michelle Obama
2. (4) Billion Dollar Whale by Tom Wright and Bradley Hope
3. (3) The Subtle Art Of Not Giving A F*ck by Mark Manson
4. (7) This Is What Inequality Looks Like by Teo You Yenn
5. (-) Brief Answers To The Big Questions by Stephen Hawking
6. (5) When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanithi
7. (6) 21 Lessons For The 21st Century by Yuval Noah Harari
8. (9) The Art Of Thinking Clearly by Rolf Dobelli
9. (-) Ikigai by Hector Garcia and Francesc Miralles
10. (-) Sapiens: A Brief History Of Humankind by Yuval Noah Harari
10. (2) Tall Order by Peh Shing Hwei

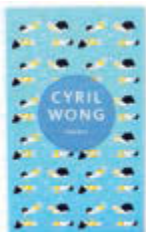
CHILDREN’S

1. (1) Dog Man #6: Brawl Of The Wild by Dav Pilkey
2. (-) The Plano Adventures #4: Attack Of The Cybugs by Mo Dirani and Hwee Goh
3. (3) Dog Man #5: Lord Of The Fleas by Dav Pilkey
4. (2) Diary Of A Wimpy Kid: The Meltdown by Jeff Kinney
5. (5) Dork Diaries #13: Tales From A Not-So-Happy Birthday by Rachel Renee Russell
6. (-) Peppa Pig: Chinese New Year by Peppa Pig
6. (8) Roblox Annual 2019 by Egmont
7. (4) Roblox Top Adventure Games by Egmont
8. (9) Diary Of A Wimpy Kid: The Getaway by Jeff Kinney
9. (-) Pokemon Sun And Moon #1 by Hidenori Kusaka
10. (-) The 104-Storey Treehouse by Andy Griffiths

• This is The Straits Times’ compilation of bestseller lists from Books Kinokuniya, Times, WHSmith and Popular bookstores.

SingaporeShelf

Olivia Ho



POETRY ONEIROS
By Cyril Wong
Math Paper Press/
Paperback/
58 pages/
\$16 before GST/
BooksActually

This new edition revives one of the Singapore Literature Prize-winning poet’s best collections.

It is a phantasmagoric gallery of dreams, some unsettling, some poignant, some terribly lonely. Some evoke tragic poets who have gone before, such as American poet Anne Sexton and Iranian poet and film director Forough Farrokhzad.

NON-FICTION



SINGAPORE THEN AND NOW
By Ray Tyers
Landmark Books/Hardcover/
292 pages/\$69.90 before GST/
Books Kinokuniya, MPH, Times and BooksActually

A quarter of a century has passed since the last edition of Tyers’ photo book. This latest one updates his wide-ranging photographic record of a lost Singapore with modern-day shots and features an introduction by architectural historian Lai Chee Kien.

Tyers was born in 1919 in London and first visited Singapore in 1934 as a merchant seaman, eventually settling on the island after World War II.

He soon turned historian, gathering late 17th- and 18th-century photographs of Singapore’s landscapes and shooting his own for comparison in a magazine series for the British-European Association.

These were eventually collected in the book’s first edition in 1976.



50 SHADES OF LOVE
By Anthea Indira Ong
Candid Creation
Publishing/
Hardcover/
324 pages/
\$53.50/
www.50ShadesofLove.org

Ong, a Nominated Member of Parliament and the founder of social enterprise Hush TeaBar, pairs stories from her life with various species of trees in this book, the covers of which are made of wood.

Net proceeds will go towards psychosocial and mental health support programmes for refugees, starting with the Rohingya.



LAS VEGAS IN SINGAPORE
By Lee Kah-Wee
NUS Press/
Paperback/
352 pages/
\$36 before GST/
Books Kinokuniya and nuspress.
nus.edu.sg

Lee takes an unusual look at the spatial history of gambling in Singapore and Las Vegas, tracing a path from 1880s colonial Singapore – when British administrators revised gambling laws in response to the political threat posed by Chinese-run gambling syndicates – to corporate Las Vegas in the 1950s and the emergence of specialist casino design.

These two histories collide in the form of integrated resort Marina Bay Sands.

PLAYS



ALAMAK!
By Elangovan
Zero Degree
Publishing/
Paperback/
258 pages/
\$25 before GST/
Select Books

Controversial poet and playwright Elangovan collects four of his provocative plays in this volume, from Alamak!, in which mythical Prince Nila Utama is fished out of the sea in the modern day and charged as a illegal immigrant, to Meow!, about a nouveau riche couple on a never-ending car journey to feed their cat.

*All prices are quoted in Singapore dollars, based on the lowest available or guarantee stateroom category of the featured departure dates, for per person on twin-sharing basis, subject to associated taxes, port expenses and gratuities ranging from \$161 to \$252. **FREE AIRFARE:** Enjoy free one-way economy airfare from Singapore to Hong Kong for Voyager of the Seas® April 23 departure. Free airfare is exclusive of all applicable airport taxes and airline surcharges at \$80 per person. Promotions apply to selected departure dates and are valid for new bookings made till Jan 31 only. All of the above information is correct at time of print, subject to availability and change without prior notice. Other terms apply.

Bright sparks at the SAG awards

Unexpected wins and reunions were among the highlights at the ceremony

LOS ANGELES • On the road to the Oscars showdown on Feb 24, the awards bandwagon made a pit stop in Los Angeles – with the Screen Actors Guild, which has 160,000 members – honouring the best in movies and television. Here are five takeaways from the ceremony on Sunday.

THE MARVELOUS MRS MAISEL WINS BIG

The biggest winner on Sunday was The Marvelous Mrs Maisel. Tony Shalhoub took the first prize of the evening, Best Actor In A Comedy Series, for his turn as the title character's father. Then, after the show's star, Rachel Brosnahan, won Best Actress, Shalhoub, backed by his castmates, returned to the stage to accept the Outstanding Ensemble award.

Black Panther beat contenders such as A Star Is Born and Crazy Rich Asians to nab the prestigious Outstanding Performance By A Cast In A Movie prize. It has been applauded as a milestone for diversity in Hollywood, a breakthrough that still has the power to surprise its cast.

"I didn't think I was going to have to speak," Chadwick Boseman said on stage, surrounded by his castmates. He said his co-stars "all know what it's like to be told that there is not a place for you to be featured. Yet, you are young, gifted and black".

BREAD-AND-BUTTER ISSUES TRUMP POLITICS

Unlike the 2017 ceremony, when United States President Donald Trump was denounced in fiery acceptance speeches, there were few overtly political moments on Sunday, which more often focused on guild issues.

Patricia Arquette, named Best Actress In A Mini-series for Escape At Dannemora, thanked Mr Robert Mueller, the special counsel investigating Russia's 2016 election interference, as she left the stage.

But she drew much more applause from fellow union members when she called out production companies that did not pay performers overtime and other fees.

M*A*S*H ACTOR HONOURED

The Lifetime Achievement Award went to Alan Alda, the veteran actor best known for the 1972 to 1983



series, M*A*S*H.

In July, he revealed that he had been living with Parkinson's disease for more than three years, but that he had been leading a full life despite the condition.

After being introduced by actor Tom Hanks, Alda took the stage to a lengthy standing ovation from the audience. "It may never have been more urgent to see the world through another person's eyes," Alda said, his hands trembling.

He added: "When the culture is divided so sharply, actors can help, at least a little, just by doing what we do."

SHOUT-OUT TO A QUIET PLACE

When Emily Blunt was named Best Supporting Actress for A Quiet Place, her husband, John Krasinski, who directed her in that movie, stood up and clapped enthusiastically as she made her way to the

stage and after she had finished her speech.

The audience could not keep quiet either, laughing when she said of Krasinski's decision to cast her: "Thank you for giving me the part. You would have been in major trouble if you hadn't."

Referring to the horror movie, she added that her daughters, aged two and four, "will have to be at least 45 before they see this film".

FATAL ATTRACTION REUNION

No presenter or presenters could steal the thunder from Glenn Close and Michael Douglas – who starred together in the 1987 steamy thriller, Fatal Attraction – when they teamed up to present Arquette with her award. Netizens were ecstatic when Close bagged a Best Actress accolade for her role in the movie, The Wife. REUTERS, NYTIMES, AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE

Looking like a million dollars on the red carpet are the cast of Crazy Rich Asians, comprising (above from left) actors Ronny Chieng, Tan Kheng Hua, Fiona Xie and Harry Shum Jr and director Jon M. Chu. PHOTOS: AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE

Gems of the red carpet

LOS ANGELES • Crazy Rich Asians did not pull off a win for Outstanding Performance By A Cast In A Movie – Black Panther took the honour – but its cast stood out at the red carpet at the Screen Actors Guild Awards in Los Angeles on Sunday.

The stars in the hit romantic comedy – Henry Golding, Constance Wu and Michelle Yeoh – scored with their fashion choices.

Golding sparkled in a gold-and-pink textured cocktail jacket from Tom Ford, throwing in a light pink silk scarf for extra effect.

Wu turned heads in a silver strapless gown from Oscar de la Renta, while Yeoh caught the eye in a haute couture gown from Elie Saab.

Hua (wearing an Ong Shunmugam creation) and Fiona Xie (in a Schiaparelli strapless gown) also contributed to the buzz as they walked the red carpet with their Crazy Rich Asians castmates.

Tan had earlier posted on Instagram: "Ready for my first ever @sagawards. I'm so nervous, but very excited."

"So proud to have a piece of my country here with me at the @sagawards. This is why I chose to wear Singaporean designers for tonight's ceremony."

Posting a picture of the celebration of the breakthrough Hollywood movie with an all-Asian cast at a SAG after-party, she said: "We won a long time ago with this @crazyrichasians gang."

Singaporean actors Tan Kheng

thenewpaper.

Weets Eats

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The best ingredients

tnp.sg/lifestyle

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And the winners are...

MOVIES

Outstanding Performance By A Cast In A Movie: Black Panther

Best Actor: Rami Malek (Bohemian Rhapsody)

Best Actress: Glenn Close (above, The Wife)

Best Supporting Actor: Mahershala Ali (Green Book)

Best Supporting Actress: Emily Blunt (right, A Quiet Place)

TELEVISION

Outstanding Ensemble, Drama Series: This Is Us

Outstanding Ensemble, Comedy Series: The Marvelous Mrs Maisel

Best Actor, Drama Series: Jason Bateman (Ozark)

Best Actress, Drama Series: Sandra Oh (Killing Eve)

Best Actor, Comedy Series: Tony Shalhoub (The Marvelous Mrs Maisel)

Best Actress, Comedy Series: Rachel Brosnahan (The Marvelous Mrs Maisel)

Best Actor, TV Movie Or Mini-series: Darren Criss (The Assassination Of Gianni Versace)

Best Actress, TV Movie Or Mini-series: Patricia Arquette (Escape At Dannemora)

தமிழ்மூலம்

Lost in translation?

A → அ

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Tamil Murasu provides error-free translation from English to Tamil

Comics

BABY BLUES



GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (PG) (V)
6.50 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
10.00 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (PG) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
PM
12.00 Martha Bakes 6 (HD) (IE)
12.30 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (HD) (CC) (V)
1.30 Kin (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 4 (SC)
2.30 Euromaxx (Cul)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (IE)
4.00 Make You Laugh Out Loud 3 (PG) (V)
4.30 Survivor 36 (PG) (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (V)
6.30 The \$100,000 Pyramid (PG) (V)
7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (HD) (CC) (V)
7.30 Tricked (Canada) (HD) (PG) (CC) (V)
8.00 The Carbonaro Effect 4 (PG) (CC) (V)
8.30 Kin (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5 (HD)
9.30 Meet The MP 2 (PG) (CC) (SC)
10.00 Zodiac...The Race Begins (PG) (M) (Premiere)
AM
12.00 Kin (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
12.30 Code Of Law 4 (PG13) (D)
1.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
2.20 Hawaii Five-O 7 (PG) (D)
3.10 Grimm 5 (PG13) (D)
4.10 Martha Bakes 6 (IE)
4.40 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 What's In The Fridge? (HD) (V)
7.00 Kids In Charge (V)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (HD) (News)
8.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Morning Express (HD) (News)

9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Are You Up For It? (V)
10.30 Night Market Life Aka Life (PG) (D)
PM
12.30 Taste With Jason 10 (CC) (IE)
1.00 News 8 At One (HD) (News)
1.30 118 (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Train Your Brain (HD) (S)
2.30 The Precedents (PG) (D)
3.30 The Golden Path (CC) (D)
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 118 Reunion (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (HD) (News)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Emergency! (CC) (V)
8.30 Tuesday Report – The Dream Catchers (CC) (IE) (Debut)
9.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight (HD)
10.30 Stay Healthy Stay Happy 2017 (IE)
11.00 Princess Agents (PG) (D)
AM
12.00 The Princess Weiyong (PG) (D)
1.00 Wonderful World 13 (HD) (V)
2.00 A Time To Dance (D)
4.00 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Taiwan 1001 Stories (IE)
4.00 Taste From Home (CC) (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 The Girl Who Sees Smells (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Food Secrets (CC) (IE)
10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG13) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight
11.30 Food Secrets (CC) (IE)
AM
12.30 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
2.30 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 Neighbours. Singapore-Malaysia
11.00 News Now
PM
1.02 Becoming Singapore
2.00 News Now

4.02 Neighbours. Singapore-Malaysia
5.00 News Now
7.02 Becoming Singapore (CC)
8.00 Primetime Asia
9.02 Becoming Singapore (CC)
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Becoming Singapore
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 Power List Asia 5
1.02 Becoming Singapore
2.00 News Now
2.30 The Successors 6
3.02 Neighbours. Singapore-Malaysia
4.00 News Now
4.30 Millionaire Minds 2
5.02 Becoming Singapore
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)
3.30 Aasai Aasaiya – Cooking For Love (IE)
4.00 Priyasakhi (D)
4.30 Thedal – Star Search 2016 (V)
5.30 Mottu Patlu (S)
6.00 Raama Seetha 2 (D)
7.00 Konjam Soru Konjam Varalaru 2 (CC) (Cul)
7.30 Mella Thiranthatu Katavu 3 (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Uyire (PG) (CC) (D)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Adayaalam (CC) (Cul)
10.00 Rowthiram (PG13) (CC) (D)
10.30 Nijangal (PG) (CC) (D)
11.00 Nyabagam Varuthae 3 (V)
11.30 Tamil Seithi (Encore) (News)
AM
12.00 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Tip The Mouse (P)
9.30 Teddies (P)
10.00 Doki Specials (HD) (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
11.00 Mouk (P)
11.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
PM
12.00 Hiccup & Sneeze (P)
12.30 Teddies (HD) (IE)

1.00 Coconut The Little Dragon (P)
1.30 Tip The Mouse (P)
2.00 Doki Specials (P)
2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
3.00 Mouk (P)
3.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
4.00 Odd Squad (HD) (S)
4.30 Captain Flinn And The Pirate Dinosaurs (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Marcus Level (S)
6.00 The Lion Guard (S)
6.30 Museum Mysteries (S)
7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (HD) (CC) (S)
7.30 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (HD) (S)
8.00 Turning Mecard (S)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (CC) (S)
9.00 ITTF World Tour – Hungarian Open 2019 (Sports)
11.10 American Ninja Warrior 6 (HD) (PG) (Sports)
AM
12.00 Close

SURIA

PM
3.00 Juxbox Ekspres
4.00 Seindah Takdir Cinta (PG) (D)
5.00 Mak Cun 4 (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 Cickaman Siri Animasi (HD) (S)
6.30 Kelana Rasa (CC) (IE)
7.00 Makmum Yang Paling Aku Cinta (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Berita (HD) (News)
8.30 Kek Champion (CC)
9.30 Rintihan Hati (PG) (CC) (D) (Finale)
10.30 Instagram (PG) (CC) (D)
11.30 Berita (HD) (News) (R)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs;
CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture;
D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies;
P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance;
R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom;
V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 – April 19)

You need to deal with someone who is not ready to hear the truth.

Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

Your ability to wow others is sure to pay off in a big way.

Gemini (May 21 – June 20)

You are having a blast – make sure you are out there in the world mixing things up.

Cancer (June 21 – July 22)

It is hard for you to focus on any one thing. Make sure you are taking things one at a time.

Leo (July 23 – Aug 22)

Your energy demands travel – explore destinations and plot your next journey.

Virgo (Aug 23 – Sept 22)

You cannot let an issue rest, but your energy is better expended on something more focused.

Libra (Sept 23 – Oct 22)

Use your talent for finding balance in all things – you know it is for the best.

Scorpio (Oct 23 – Nov 21)

Let yourself be guided by deeper thoughts and exploration of new ideas and places.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 – Dec 21)

You are feeling good about your place in the world. Help others feel the same way.

Capricorn (Dec 22 – Jan 19)

If you can keep slogging, you are sure to find that things pick up in a big way.

Aquarius (Jan 20 – Feb 18)

Your mental energy is right for organisation. Make sure everything goes according to plan.

Pisces (Feb 19 – March 20)

Do not worry about paying the price for doing what is right – everything should sort itself out.

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Charmaine Yee
4.00 Shan Wee
8.00 Josh's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 ONE FM's #1 Breakfast Show With Glenn And The Flying Dutchman
10.00 Cheryl Miles
PM
4.00 Weekdays With ONE FM
MONEY FM 89.3
AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker, Yasmin Jonkers & Ryan Huang
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kemin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7.16am/7.20pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 1.47am/2.08pm

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 5.16am (2.7m), 11.58am (1.1m), 6.22pm (2.3m). Desaru: 4.48am (2.5m), 11.30am (1.3m), 6.13pm (2.4m). Port Dickson: 12.29am (2.2m), 7.39am (0.9m), 1.01pm (1.7m), 6.58pm (0.8m). Mersing: 3.56am (2.7m), 11.04am (1.3m), 6.12pm (2.6m), 11.43pm (2.1m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 12am (1.5m), 6.13am (2.6m), 1.24pm (1m), 8.26pm (2.2m). Desaru: 12am (1.8m), 5.35am (2.4m), 12.41pm (1.2m), 8.09pm (2.4m). Port Dickson: 2am (2m), 9.17am (1m), 2.36pm (1.5m), 8.45pm (0.9m). Mersing: 4.29am (2.5m), 11.57am (1.3m), 7.40pm (2.7m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
10.25 The Cars That Made America
PM
12.15 Football Godfathers
1.10 Counting Cars 5
2.05 Pawn Stars 18
2.35 Storage Wars: Miami
3.00 Storage Wars 10
3.30 History Drama: Vikings 5
4.25 The Cars That Made America
6.15 The Pickers 11/7.10 Pawn Stars 19
8.05 Storage Wars: Miami
8.30 Storage Wars 10
9.00 Storage Wars 12
9.55 Forged In Fire 4
10.50 Mountain Men 7
11.45 Lone Star Restoration

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
11.00 Atlanta Plastic
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 6
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 Drink, Slay, Love
3.35 Leah Remini: Scientology & The Aftermath
4.30 Live PD Presents: Women On Patrol
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Idol Moms
7.00 Little Women LA: Terra's Little Family
7.30 Married At First Sight Australia 4
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 Jodi Picoult's Salem Falls
11.35 Idol Moms

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
10.50 Invincible
PM
12.30 Man On Fire (NC16)
2.55 Star Trek (2009)
5.00 Raising Helen/6.55 Ocean's Thirteen
9.00 Inconceivable (2017) (NC16)
10.45 Thor
AM
12.35 Ingrid Goes West (NC16)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
11.35 Strike Back 6
PM
12.35 Eight Legged Freaks
2.15 Big Momma's House 2 (NC16)
3.55 Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge Of The Sith
6.15 Scooby-Doo! Shaggy's Showdown
7.35 Black Hawk Down (NC16)
10.00 The One
11.30 Hollywood Homicide
AM
1.25 Mr & Mrs Smith

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
6.00 Alpha Beta
6.55 Signal (HD)
8.15 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)

9.15 Dowry (HD)
10.15 Perfect Dating 6 (HD)
11.45 Hong Kong Neighbourhood Gems (HD)
PM
12.15 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)/1.25 Signal (HD)
2.45 Hot Door Night 11
3.45 The Doctor (HD)
4.45 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)/6.00 Dowry (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
8.00 Viva La Romance (HD)
10.00 Noble Aspirations (HD)
11.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
7.00 ISU European Figure Skating Championships: Women's Short Programme
PM
1.00 ISU European Figure Skating Championships: Opening + Pairs Short Programme/4.30 Tennis: Deuce
5.00 Horse Racing: FEI Equestrian World 2018
5.30 Mountain Bike: Enduro World Series 2018: Italy Highlights
6.00 Mountain Bike: Enduro World Series 2018: Whistler Highlights
6.30 Table Tennis: Seamaster ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open: Men's Semi-finals
8.30 Table Tennis: Seamaster ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open: Women & Men's Singles Finals
11.00 Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018
AM
12.00 Tennis: Mubadala World Tennis Championships 2018 Day 2 Semi-finals 2

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
7.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
7.30 Magazine: Trans World Sport
8.30 Football: Coppa Italia Preview
9.00 Wrestling: WWE Raw (PG13) (Live)
PM
12.00 HSBC World Rugby Sevens World Series Round 3 Hamilton: Matches 13 To 16
1.30 HSBC World Rugby Sevens World Series Round 3 Hamilton: Matches 17 To 20
3.00 HSBC World Rugby Sevens World Series Round 3 Hamilton: Matches 21 To 24
4.30 Wrestling: WWE Experience (PG)
5.30 National Basketball League Round 15: Illawarra Hawks Vs Cairns Taipans
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
8.00 Asean Basketball League: Zhuhai Wolf Warriors Vs San Miguel Alab Pilipinas (Live)
10.00 Wrestling: WWE This Week (PG)
10.30 Football: The EFL Highlights
11.00 The Football Review
11.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
AM
12.00 Wrestling: WWE Experience (PG)
1.00 Football: Coppa Italia Preview
1.30 Magazine: The Burning Issue
2.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
2.30 Football: The EFL Highlights
3.00 Football: Coppa Italia Preview
3.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
3.40 Football: Coppa Italia Quarter-finals: Milan Vs Napoli (Live)

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
8.00 Teen Titans Go!
9.00 Grizzy And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears
10.30 Supernooobs
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 The Powerpuff Girls
3.00 Running Man Animation
3.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 Ben 10
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
6.30 Running Man Animation
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
7.30 Grizzy And The Lemmings
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
7.30 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2
8.20 The Elements: Cosentino
9.10 American Ninja Warrior 8
10.00 MacGyver 2
10.50 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 3
11.40 Carnage
PM
12.30 Cyril: Simply Magic
1.25 The Elements: Cosentino
2.15 American Ninja Warrior 8
3.05 Carnage
4.00 MacGyver 2
4.50 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior
5.40 American Ninja Warrior 8
6.35 Hawaii Five-O 9
7.30 The International
9.45 The Blacklist 6
10.35 Instinct
11.25 The Blacklist 6

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
7.40 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
8.30 Supergirl 2
9.20 The Flash 3
10.10 Clipaholics
11.00 Breaking The Magician's Code
11.50 Keanu
PM
1.30 The Big Bang Theory 9
1.50 Friends 9

2.15 Clipaholics
3.05 Breaking The Magician's Code
3.55 The Flash 3
4.45 Supergirl 2
5.30 Top 20 Funniest
6.20 The Flash 3
7.10 Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban
9.50 Arrow 7
10.40 The Big Bang Theory 9
11.05 Friends 9
11.30 Race To The Scene

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

AM
7.15 Kids Do The Craziest Things
7.40 Mr Bean
8.10 Your Face Or Mine 3
8.35 Most Ridiculous 2
9.05 Billy On The Street 5
9.30 Takeshi's Castle 4
9.55 Mr Bean
10.25 Most Ridiculous 2
10.55 Almost Royals 2
11.20 Saturday Night Live 43
PM
12.05 The Daily Show 24
12.30 Wanda Sykes: Tongue Untied
1.15 Just For Laughs Gags 14
1.40 Inside Comedy 3
2.45 Mr Bean
3.15 Takeshi's Castle 4
3.40 Most Ridiculous 2
4.05 Almost Royals 2
4.30 Lip Sync Battle 4
5.20 Hood Adjacent With James Davis
5.45 The Jim Jefferies Show
6.10 The Daily Show 24
6.35 Caraoke Showdown
7.00 Your Face Or Mine 3
7.25 Most Ridiculous 2
7.50 Billy On The Street 5
8.10 Takeshi's Castle 4
8.35 Just For Laughs Gags 14
9.05 Caraoke Showdown
9.30 Stand-up, Asia! 2
10.25 Inside Amy Schumer 2
10.50 Above Average Presents
11.00 The Jim Jefferies Show
11.25 The Fucccons
11.30 The Daily Show 24

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

AM
7.00 First Love
8.00 Entrepreneurial Age
9.00 Eagle And Youngster
10.00 100% Wife
PM
12.10 First Love
1.00 In The Name Of Love
2.00 100% Wife
4.10 Entrepreneurial Age
5.00 First Love
6.00 In The Name Of Love
7.00 100% Wife
9.10 First Love
10.00 Entrepreneurial Age
11.00 Eagle And Youngster

Awkwafina reveals new side in The Farewell

LOS ANGELES • Awkwafina brought on the laughs last year in Crazy Rich Asians. Now, she is making viewers turn pensive with her role in The Farewell, whose world premiere over the weekend at the Sundance Film Festival drew a standing ovation.

The movie stars the rapper-actress as a Chinese-American who returns to China to visit her ailing grandmother. She agrees to help stage a fake wedding to make the elderly woman – who does not know

of her terminal illness – happy.

“It enriches what we know about Asians, it adds substance to the characters,” the Deadline entertainment portal cited her as saying about the subject matter in The Farewell.

“You have the first evolution, then you have the second evolution of stories,” she added, alluding to Crazy Rich Asians, whose feel-good romantic-comedy vibe generated box-office buzz last year.

She is not upset that Crazy Rich

Asians did not garner Oscar nominations, knowing that change cannot be rushed.

“I don’t really know the exact reasoning behind it, but yeah, of course it would have been cool,” she told trade publication Variety.

Still, “we actually won the Critics’ Choice Best Comedy. I don’t think we anticipated it – to be nominated for any awards – so the fact that it got as much recognition as it did, I think that’s enough”.

The Farewell looks set to catapult

her to a higher orbit, with the movie close to landing a deal with indie studio A24 for worldwide distribution rights, Variety noted. Netflix and Amazon were also reportedly keen to snap up the rights.

Awkwafina, who said in an earlier interview that she wants to play “something that’s not necessarily meant for an Asian” – is set to lend her voice to the sequel of The Angry Birds Movie (2016) and is in talks to star in the follow-up to Jumanji: Welcome To The Jungle (2017).



American rapper-actress Awkwafina at the Sundance Film Festival last week, where The Farewell, which she stars in, drew a standing ovation. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Live Nation Entertainment and One Production are bringing K-pop girl group Blackpink, seen here at the Gaon Chart Music Awards in Seoul last week, to Singapore for their debut show here next month. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Concert promoters Live Nation, One Production team up

Anjali Raguraman

One of the juggernauts of Western live entertainment, Live Nation Entertainment, has joined forces with one of the biggest Asian concert promoters here, One Production.

In an announcement yesterday, Live Nation, which is headquartered in California, said it has acquired a controlling interest in Singapore-based company One Production.

Live Nation’s Singapore arm, which focuses mainly on bringing in North American and European acts, held some of the biggest concerts here last year, including those by American pop star Bruno Mars and Canadian R&B singer The Weeknd.

This year, acts such as American pop band Maroon 5 and singer-songwriter John Mayer as well as Australian pop star Troye Sivan are slated to play.

Meanwhile, One Production, which has had a presence here for

the past decade, is better known for bringing in major Asian acts including Taiwanese rockers Mayday and South Korean boyband BigBang.

“By joining forces with One Production, we are creating the leading international concert promotion business in Singapore,” said Live Nation Asia Pacific chairman Alan Ridgeway. “We look forward to amplifying performance opportunities for artists and diversifying concert offerings for fans by welcoming the local expertise of the One Production team.”

One Production managing director Ngiam Kwang Hwa added: “We already know the Live Nation team very well and are excited by all the opportunities this new venture generates for our team and our artists.”

Both promoters have already teamed up to bring in K-pop mega stars BTS, who played a sold-out show at the National Stadium this month. Next up for them are K-pop girl group Blackpink, who play their sold-out debut show at the Singapore Indoor Stadium next month.

Cheung did not name father on son’s birth cert

HONG KONG • Hong Kong actress Cecilia Cheung continued to keep the identity of her third son’s father under wraps even when registering his birth.

According to Hong Kong’s Next Magazine, the birth certificate records that Marcus Cheung was born at Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital on Nov 18 last year.

However, the father’s name is not stated.

According to Hong Kong law, it means the child has no legal relationship with the biological father and will have no rights to the father’s estate.

Cheung, 38, has two sons – Lucas, 11, and Quintus, eight – from her five-year marriage to actor Nicholas

Tse. The couple divorced in 2011.

Speculation on her third son’s father has ranged from a 65-year-old Singaporean tycoon and a 50-year-old Chinese magnate to ex-husband Tse, and actor and director Stephen Chow.

The magazine reports that Cheung sent Marcus to Vancouver, Canada, after he was born so her half-sister Dai Pek Chi could take care of him.

The two women enjoy a close relationship and Cheung had sponsored Dai’s studies in Canada.

Cheung had also taken Lucas and Quintus to Canada for a period after her divorce from Tse. Dai helped to look after the two boys when Cheung worked.

Man Booker prize sponsor pulls out

LONDON • Investment firm Man Group is ending its long-running sponsorship of Britain’s prestigious Man Booker prizes for novels, both sides announced on Sunday.

The group has invested £25 million (\$\$44.5 million) in the prize, its international edition and other related activities over the past 17 years.

The Booker Prize Foundation said its trustees “are in discussion with a new sponsor and are confident that the new funding will be in place for 2020”.

This year’s two prizes will run as usual.

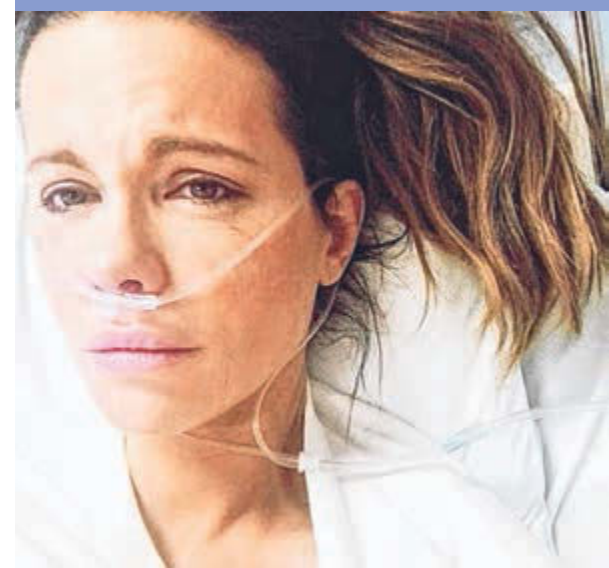
The winner of the Man Booker receives £52,500, although the bigger prize is seen as a spike in sales which invariably follows. Winners include V.S. Naipaul, Iris Murdoch, Salman Rushdie, Kingsley Amis, Kazuo Ishiguro and Ian McEwan.

The award, launched in 1969, was open only to novelists from Commonwealth states until it began permitting those from other English-speaking countries in 2014.

Author Sebastian Faulks, who was once a judge on the prize but has never won it, last year criticised Man Group, saying it should not be the sponsor for such a prize.

Man Group chief executive Luke Ellis reportedly hit back, saying: “Literature and the arts need their champions to step in where public money has been pulled out.” AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

On social media



BECKINSALE Warded FOR RUPTURED OVARIAN CYST: Is actress Kate Beckinsale trying to profit from her ill health? That suspicion was aired by some netizens when the 45-year-old posted photographs and accounts of her medical condition.

But she has hit back at such claims of her trying to get a career booster shot. She was warded after suffering a ruptured ovarian cyst, she posted last Saturday. “Turns out a ruptured ovarian cyst really hurts and morphine makes me cry. So thankful to everyone who looked after me,” she captioned the photos, one of which showed her with an oxygen tube in her nose.

After some netizens wondered why she was taking selfies, she clarified matters, saying: “My mum took it. In fact, I would not have posted it if we had not noticed someone in a car taking a photo of me leaving the hospital in a wheelchair.”

She further shut down naysayers by writing: “I have Instagram largely to have my own honest narrative and not have to always be invaded by stories that come out that are embellished, I’d prefer to say what happened than endure speculation and so I chose to share.”

“I agree, it’s not a normal impulse (to share a private moment). But it’s not normal to be photographed in vulnerable situations by people you don’t know either.” PHOTO: KATE BECKINSALE/INSTAGRAM

Japanese band Arashi call it quits next year?

TOKYO • Arashi, one of Japan’s oldest and most popular boybands, will suspend activities at the end of next year.

At a press conference on Sunday, leader Satoshi Ohno, 38, said he first talked to his bandmates about

the plan in June 2017.

“I want to live a life of freedom,” he said.

He added that he would leave the limelight in 2021.

The other members said they have yet to decide on personal

plans, but implied that they would not quit show business.

The other members – Masaki Aiba, Jun Matsumoto, Kazunari Ninomiya and Sho Sakurai – support Ohno’s decision.

“It’s tough if one person’s views

can decide the future of Arashi, but it is also not right to tie down the life of a person,” said Sakurai, 37.

The group, which debuted in November 1999, will tour Japan to mark their 20th anniversary this year. BLOOMBERG

Exclusively for The Straits Times subscribers

Win a trip for two to mystical Shangri-La, Yunnan, valued at \$10,000



The Hidden Valley Resort is the first glamping (glamorous camping) boutique resort in Shangri-La, Yunnan. Located in a stunning Tibetan enclave in China’s last frontier, the resort offers a truly unique travel experience. Besides glamping under the stars, you get to soak up Tibetan culture, hike, ride a horse, enjoy farm-to-table cuisine and venture to less-travelled places with a bespoke itinerary.

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1. Download the SPH Rewards app.
2. Look out for the giveaway in the Rewards section.
3. Save the deal to your e-wallet.
4. Press the “JOIN” button on the top right and answer this question in no more than 100 words: “Why I want to go to The Hidden Valley Resort in Shangri-La”.

The contest ends on Feb 8 and the winner will be informed by Feb 18. The travel period is between March and May 2019.

The winner is required to participate in a media interview prior to the trip and to share photos on his or her social media during his or her stay. Other terms and conditions apply.

Read the story here: str.sg/hiddenvalley
Check out this ST video: str.sg/shangrila

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